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## Minorities in the Urban Territory of Samarkand from the Soviet Years to the Present

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149



# Changing Urban Landscapes

Eastern European and Post-Soviet Cities  
Since 1989

*Edited by Marco Buttino*

viella

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## Introduction

I have been a frequent traveller in Russia and Central Asia for many years now. My trips have usually been long; and I have spent the best part of my time in the archives. One of the most extraordinary aspects of this experience has been what I encountered when I would emerge from the archives: the world around me was changing at an unbelievable rate. In my work as an historian of the Soviet Union, I could hardly avoid taking into account what I was seeing and thinking as I walked through the streets, first in Soviet, then in post-Soviet Moscow, Tashkent, Almaty or other cities. I looked at the world through the eyes of an historian; but I needed other tools to interpret what was happening around me. As a result, I became interested in urban history and began to read the works of anthropologists, sociologists, town planners, and geographers.

I found another clue pointing in the same direction in the very city where I live in Italy, and the same can be said for the cities where most of you live, too: the immigrants from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, whom we meet in ever greater numbers, tell us of the transformations taking place in their cities of origin. They contribute to these transformations through their absence, through the remittances they send, and their influence on relatives and friends who have not migrated, as well as through their return visits. This volume reflects these two perspectives and contains studies with different disciplinary approaches, investigating changes that have come about in the last twenty years in some cities of the East.

In the same years, independently of what was happening in the East, migratory flows have become more consistent all over the world, cultural contacts and the circulation of information more intense. There are cities where the population has increased and become more complex in its cul-



ture, others where the population has diminished through emigration. The specificity of these countries is due to their having had communist regimes for decades and having been dragged down by their collapse, a collapse that plunged many cities in the East into deep crisis and induced many of the inhabitants to emigrate, while other cities successfully entered global networks. The opening up of frontiers and the change-over to market economies effectively brought these countries and their cities very abruptly into the world of globalisation.<sup>1</sup>

Today many of these cities boast a modernity signalled by membership in international business networks, and they underscore this belonging by adapting their image. In the first years after the collapse of the communist regimes, the urban landscapes began to change following the building of skyscrapers by banks and multinational companies, later becoming increasingly vertical. Even the cities on the margins of development were not unaffected by this craze for modernity: the “European style” spread everywhere, indicating a will to conform to standards and canons of taste that identified with those of Western Europe. This “European style” affects, above all, the houses of families whose relatives are working abroad. Around the world people have come under the spell of an imaginary West, which informs the changes in their cities. This might be defined as “occidentalism,” implying something like “orientalism,” but in reverse.

Tension with regard to the global future marks the urban landscape in many ways, with new buildings, reconstructions of and transformations in

1. The features of the post-1989 urban transformation are the topic of various studies with a comparative approach. See: G. Enyedi, ed., *Social Change and Urban Restructuring in Central Europe* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1998); M. J. Bradshaw, M. Bradshaw, A. Stenning, *East Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union: The Post-Socialist States* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2004); I. Hamilton, K. D. Andrews, N. Pichler-Milanovic, eds., *Transformation of Cities in Central and Eastern Europe: Towards Globalization* (Tokyo, New York, Paris: United Nations University Press, 2005); S. Tsenkova, Z. Nedović-Budić, eds., *The Urban Mosaic of Post-Socialist Europe. Space, Institutions and Policy* (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 2006); U. Altrock, S. Güntner, S. Huning, D. Peters, eds., *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006); G. Andrusz, M. Harloe, I. Szelenyi, eds., *Cities After Socialism: Urban and Regional Changes and Conflicts in Post-socialist Societies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2006); I. Brade, K. Axenov, E. Bondarchuk, eds., *The Transformation of Urban Space in Post-Soviet Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2006); K. Stanilov, ed., *The Post-Socialist City: Urban Form and Space Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe After Socialism*, GeoJournal Library Series, no. 92 (Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2007).

the use of both public and private space. In their physical structure, cities tend to resist this urge to remodel: it is difficult to demolish or completely alter buildings, squares, and monuments. As a new rhetoric, post-Soviet modernity triumphs when the political forces have the strength to be aggressive and where there are areas that are free from signs of the past. In the East, one example of this is Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan, built in recent years practically from scratch. Here the “Western” model is Dubai or Shanghai, and architects have come from all over the world, fascinated by the freedom made possible by the absence of the past. The model that appeals to these cities is, in reality, an abstract reference that has by now taken root all over the world, independently of Europe.

In new cities like Astana, the buildings not only lead towards a science-fiction concept of the future, but also tell their own version of the past. If you take the time to glance through the photographs of Astana, you will find in the designs of the buildings, their decorations, colours, and imagery, continuous references to traditions that lend themselves to the composition of a national style.<sup>2</sup> Here even the invention of the past has no limits, since there has never been a significant urban past for the Kazak people, who were semi-nomadic until forced to settle in the 1930s. By contrast, in other cities the constraints to rewriting the past are significant, though the political and cultural operation is similar.

During the years of the communist regimes, the population of Eastern cities was affected by systematic policies of integration and assimilation aimed at erasing previous cultural heritage and national specificities. These cities were the object of broad nationalisation of land and properties, state planning, and the symbolic construction of the urban landscape promoting communist political power. After the collapse of these regimes, the birth of new states entailed the transformation of the meaning of belonging to a specific national, ethnic and religious group, and the redefinition of citizenship rights through policies of inclusion and exclusion. Among other consequences, the demise of the state-controlled economy brought about the privatisation of real estate. The legal recognition, application, and enforcement of property rights were indispensable conditions for the development of the market, the birth of enterprise, and the arrival of foreign investment.

2. See the chapter by V. Buchli, “Astana: Materiality and the City,” in C. Alexander, V. Buchli, C. Humphrey, eds., *Urban Life in Post-Soviet Asia* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 40-69. Many photographs of the city can be found online.

The acquisition of citizenship and ownership rights proceeded in parallel; they were the pillars on which the transformation hinged.

Several cities changed very rapidly, succeeding in attracting wealth and migrants seeking work. Other cities saw the impoverishment and emigration of the greater part of their population. Sometimes populations moved to the cities simply to escape the poverty of the countryside then filling the spaces left vacant by those who had emigrated. City administrators would either implement welcoming policies by adopting an inclusive approach towards citizenship or they might hamper such arrivals and keep the newcomers on the margins. During the transitional phase to sovereign states, these policies were closely tied to the urge to build a “nation,” so they tended to create national majorities with full rights and new minorities.

Each of the articles in this collection addresses the specific case of a city or group of cities in Central/Eastern Europe or Central Asia and investigates how the transformations in the last twenty years may be linked to changes in the urban physical structures and leave traces on the townscape. The authors come from different disciplinary perspectives (anthropology, history or geography) but agree on the need to explore these recent changes within a broader chronological framework. Strong cultural antagonism to Soviet influence characterises all of the cities discussed in our case studies. Two of these cities are located on the Asian outskirts of the former Soviet Union and experienced a clash between Russian and local cultures. These are Almaty, founded as a Russian fortress-city, now predominantly inhabited by Kazaks, and Samarkand, originally a Tajik city that then underwent Russian and Soviet colonialism, and today is dominated by Uzbek nationalism. The others are cities in Central and Eastern Europe, in which an indirect influence of the “Soviet model” has not cancelled cultural and political diversities. They are: Berlin, which now unites the long separate worlds of Western and Eastern Europe; Ksamil, an Albanian town with strong Greek influences; various towns in Romania, and within these a population on the margins, the Roma; Sarajevo, once the cosmopolitan capital of Bosnia, devastated by the war in the 1990s which split the Serb and Muslim populations.

### *1. The recent past: A cumbersome legacy*

Over the last twenty years, the urban transformations in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union have been heavily condi-

tioned by the legacy of city planning and the social policies of the communist regimes. These regimes were in some ways different from one another; but their basic policies were similar as were the urban planning solutions that bear their mark. The “Soviet model,” as it used to be called, acted as a point of reference for the heterogeneous territory that had been incorporated into the Soviet Union and the countries within its sphere of influence. Over the years the contents of the model changed and urban policies evolved as a result, continuing, however, to be an important instrument in forging socialist society. It is useful, therefore, to bear in mind the essential features of this model.

The transformation of Moscow between the 1930s and 1950s constituted the first model to adopt wherever possible within the Soviet Union and to export abroad. Moscow in those years, with its imposing style and its neo-classical and neo-baroque architecture, underscored the authority of power and exalted the new Stalinist governing class of proletarian origin.<sup>3</sup> This type of architecture can be seen in the 1950s throughout the socialist states: from Stalinallee in Berlin to Tiananmen Square and the Shi Da Jianzhu of Beijing. After Stalin’s death, the Soviet state attempted to solve its serious housing deficit by providing citizens with individual flats in new buildings, thereby reducing cohabitation. Promoted by Khrushchev, the campaign began in the second half of the 1950s and led to an extraordinary housing boom.<sup>4</sup> To live in a single-family flat became the ambition of factory workers and clerks alike, and the state made use of this as a powerful political lever of consensus. In Soviet cities and in those of the other socialist countries, a standardised housing type became widespread: the same building models and flat-types were constructed everywhere, promoting a homogeneous lifestyle. In the 1960s five-storey buildings were the norm, then becoming gradually larger and industrially built. In the last two decades of the Soviet Union, housing construction was not just a direct state operation, but the initiative of cooperatives, usually linked to the factories.<sup>5</sup>

3. A. De Magistris, *La costruzione della città totalitaria* (Milan: CittàStudi, 1995) and A. De Magistris, ed., *Paesaggi dell’utopia staliniana* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1997).

4. Between 1953 and 1970 38 million apartments were built for 141 million people (38 million families) in the whole of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, a part of the population still lived in cohabitation. See S. E. Harris, “‘We too want to live in normal apartments’: Soviet mass housing and the marginalization of the elderly under Khrushchev and Breznev,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 32, 2-3 (2005), pp. 143-74.

5. A. S. Senyavskij, *Russkij gorod* (Moscow: RAN, 1995), pp. 204-7.

Construction of the city and the social fabric proceeded under the guiding hand of political authority. The aim was to reinforce social cohesion, progressively overcoming the differences in ways of life. Within the Soviet Union this meant involving the whole population, including those of the republics with different languages and traditions, in a process of cultural assimilation and Russification. In the other countries policies aimed at building social and national cohesion adopted similar means. Where there were regions inhabited by minorities, the uniformity of housing conditions helped to erase cultural differences. This was the pattern in the Soviet Union, other socialist countries, and China.<sup>6</sup>

In all of the socialist countries a private building sector did exist, independent of the canons of standardisation. The “Soviet model” of serial residential buildings was rarely adopted in less Stalinist countries like Yugoslavia and even in the less industrial areas and the smaller towns of the other states, including those of the Soviet Union itself. Private houses were partly a remnant of the past (since they were too poor and small to be expropriated) and partly recently-built residences in less developed regions where state delays in providing housing had been compensated for by conceding building land to private citizens. In Soviet Central Asia private houses were relatively common; they are not found in the industrial districts, populated largely by Slavs, but in the neighbourhoods of the native population and in those of recent migration from the countryside. The funding for building often came from the “second economy;” that is, from activities that were neither state-run nor official, but tolerated by the state. To put it very schematically, we could say that a state economy and an allied state building sector, and a society organized according to the “Soviet model” coexisted with a “second economy,” neighbourhoods populated by private houses and a web of informal relationships based on values that were represented as traditional. These were not two parallel worlds but complementary aspects of the same world, officially Soviet and public, but also traditional and private. This ambiguity was especially evident in Central Asia and the Caucasus, but could be found

6. On Soviet Central Asia, as well as the two essays in this volume, see: C. Alexander, “Almaty: Rethinking the Public Sector,” pp. 70-101, and M. Tokhtakhodzhaeva, “Tashkent: Three Capitals, Three Worlds,” pp. 102-25 in Alexander, Buchli, Humphrey, eds., *Urban Life in Post-Soviet Asia* (2007). On China: P. R. Ganbatz, *Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontiers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); J. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

in all regions of the Soviet Union. Deviation from the official rules and laws was somehow part of daily life for Soviet citizens and was generally tolerated, although sometimes prosecuted as corruption. In all of the socialist countries there was no lack of private economic enterprise, privatisation of resources, and public activities. They involved the use of land, buildings, machinery, means of transport, and shops.

The collapse of the communist regimes was followed by the privatisation of public property and housing. As a consequence, city planning policies and real estate structures were transformed; new social dynamics and previously unheard-of differences in income appeared. Where once houses had belonged to the state, privatisation offered families additional economic opportunities: a housing market opened up when those in financial difficulty or intending to move or emigrate sold their homes, while others accumulated real estate property, refurbished flats or whole buildings, and resold them.

In Yugoslavia, the war, which accompanied the collapse of the regime, affected the control of the territory, the expulsion of population, and house possession. Here too, as we shall see below, the return to a state of certainty in ownership rights, including houses privately owned before the war, played a central role in overcoming conflict.

The lifestyles and ways of thinking developed within the context of the socialist regimes became suddenly cumbersome after their collapse. Social life began to change very rapidly. The places where this came about – cities, squares, streets, and houses – adjusted to the change, though not all at the same pace. Governments, anxious to direct change, took steps to transform the symbols of power to suit the new realities and made an effort to involve citizens by rewriting the past to conform to the new aspirations. National rebirth, favoured by the new policies, tended to find its roots in the past preceding the formation of socialist regimes, and to consider the socialist period as a parenthesis. The new urban planning policies supported this return to the pre-Soviet period through an intense programme of building, re-building, and refurbishing. Sometimes an imagined mono-national past was mobilised to counter the cultural complexity of the present day, now considered a threat. In other cases, a multinational past was evoked instead as a reference for democratic orientation and the reconstruction of ties with Western Europe; sometimes aggressive new liberal ideals led to incursions of the market which paid no heed to conservation or the construction of national identity.<sup>7</sup>

7. On the rewriting of the past using the urban landscape, see the essay by L. Candidi. Other studies on this topic are: U. Sailer-Fliege, "Characteristics of Post-Socialist Urban

Citizens might be involved in these new rhetorics, but the rupture with the past was still considerable: jobs changed, as did working conditions; social security diminished; school qualifications became useless; new opportunities, hitherto unheard-of, became real; and, at last, it was possible to emigrate. While the authorities were rewriting the past to offer new certainties, citizens found themselves having to reimagine their future.

Each essay in this collection looks at the case of a specific city. The issues addressed are different but connected to one another. In the following pages I will highlight some of the areas of common ground. The articles have been arranged following an imaginary itinerary from the East towards Italy, the actual route taken by many migrants.

## *2. Post-Soviet nationalisms and urban spaces: The case of Almaty*

The first two essays concern two cities in Central Asia from an historical perspective: Almaty in Kazakhstan and Samarkand in Uzbekistan. While the Soviet Union was collapsing, the political elites of both countries – formerly the native component of Soviet power – sought new sources of legitimacy. A cautious nationalism was developing in the two countries, which helped to justify the preference given to members of those national groups bearing the republic's name in accessing resources that had become scarce: jobs, positions of responsibility in the state, housing. Members of the national majorities reinforced their positions while the others, now considered minorities, found their citizenship rights questioned.

Giulia Paniciari looks at the case of Almaty, highlighting the complex and contradictory nature of building the new Kazak nation. My own essay on Samarkand investigates new minority groups. While the theme of the birth of new national majorities and minorities is not addressed only in these two articles, it is most evident in these cases since Central Asia had effectively become a colonised territory. The collapse of the regime was

Transformation in East Central Europe,” *GeoJournal*, 1 (1999), pp. 7-16; C. Young, S. Kaczmarek, “The Socialist Past and Post-Socialist Urban Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Łódź, Poland,” *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 1 (2008), pp. 53-70; J. Czaplicka, N. Gelazis, B. A. Ruble, eds., *Cities After the Fall of Communism: Reshaping Cultural Landscapes and European Identity* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009); A. Gerö, *Public Space in Budapest: The History of Kossuth Square*, East European Monographs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).



described, therefore, as the liberation and conquest of national sovereignty. The same theme reappears in Liza Candidi's essay on Berlin.

Almaty, founded in the Tsarist era by Russian armies and settlers, became the capital of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan, and today has a predominantly Kazak population. The Kazak political elite, which is now forging the nation, had already formed in the Soviet era and administers power inherited from that period. It promotes an inclusive form of nationalism based on the centrality of the Kazak people who are now, at least according to official rhetoric, the masters of the country. In the name of the new post-Soviet way, this political power has transformed Almaty, destroying symbols of the Soviet era and building new points of reference for the collective imagination: changing the use and shape of public spaces, regulating rights to citizenship, and favouring the geographical mobility of the inhabitants. Meanwhile, the outlook of the urban population has changed: many Slavs have abandoned Almaty, while migrants have arrived from nearby republics in crisis and Kazaks have moved in from the countryside to look for work and seek acknowledgement of their rights. The new political rhetoric neither includes all of the population to the same degree, nor even all the Kazaks in the city. There are striking differences in culture and lifestyle among the Kazaks: some families have been urbanised for decades and shaped by the education system and organisation of daily life of the Soviet era, while other families, who have arrived in recent years, have brought their poverty and peasant culture with them. The former inhabit the central districts and repetitive buildings of the Soviet era; the latter live in precarious conditions, often in illegal dwellings, and struggle to access the resources of the city. This second group claims more ardently to be attached to "national" traditions and to represent the Kazak majority. Tensions among the Kazaks, the separation of those living in the centre from those in the outskirts, reveal the contradictions of Kazak nationalism, with various groups of stakeholders vying for primacy. Thus, the contest over of citizenship proceeds unevenly within the Kazak population.

### *3. New minorities and contested urban spaces: Samarkand*

The article on Samarkand focuses attention on integration processes and citizenship building. However, the situation is very different from that of Almaty. There are similar issues of nationalism – here Uzbek – but the national



and urban contexts are generally different. Uzbekistan did not construct a strong and open economy after the Soviet crisis and its nationalist discourse did not consolidate economic development, though somehow it compensated for its absence. Nationalism was useful to lend legitimacy to the government and regulate access to the resources, which had become scarce, in favour of the titular population: jobs and official posts were assigned preferentially to Uzbeks over others. As in Almaty, there was substantial, almost total, emigration from Samarkand by Slavs and members of various minority groups deported there during the Stalinist era. Subsequently, a significant part of the native population had to emigrate to look for work abroad. Thus, the city witnessed the emptying of districts and housing and families began to consider remittances from relatives abroad as an indispensable part of their incomes. Migrants from the countryside filled the empty spaces as in Almaty. In the city, within a few years of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian language lost the centrality that it had once held, and different cultures replaced Soviet culture. As a result, the city was transformed both in its physical structure and the lifestyle of its inhabitants.

The population most visibly affected by these changes was the Slav minority, which had formerly held a prominent position and whose language was the most widely spoken in the city. This process also involved the numerically dominant Tajiks, even though they had been subject to repeated waves of Uzbekisation. The Uzbek population assumed a fundamental role, becoming the masters of Samarkand, a position they had never occupied in the past. The tensions which in Almaty split the inhabitants of the urban centre from the new arrivals in the outskirts, and which spread through the Kazak population itself, were felt here between the Tajiks of the centre and the Uzbeks, who were taking over increasingly larger areas in the city. This essay considers the processes of integration and exclusion, examining the paths taken by certain minorities, from Soviet times to the present situation of Uzbek pre-eminence. Three minorities are studied: the Bukhara Jews who came to Samarkand in the second half of the nineteenth century and emigrated from the country in the last twenty years; the Lyuli, a gypsy people who became sedentary after the end of the nineteenth century and are still present in the city; and the Koreans, who were deported from the Far East in the years immediately before the Second World War and who have largely emigrated in the last two decades.

Finally, this study reconstructs the diverse pathways of social integration pursued by these minorities during the Soviet period and examines

how these processes were interrupted, giving way to the formation of distinct identity groups in the context of the urban economic crisis and the pressing “Uzbekisation” of the city. First integration, then mass emigration and the ghettoising of the Lyuli minority have left a significant mark on the urban territory: housing, neighbourhoods, and the city as a whole have seen inhabitants change over, and with them language and culture, and ways of using urban public and private space.

#### *4. Rewriting the past to construct the future: Berlin*

The symbolic nationalisation of urban spaces happens in countries that become independent and in which new national states are constructed. This can be seen in the Central Asian cities we have looked at above, which might be compared to countries on other continents in the first stage after the end of colonialism. The same processes in Eastern Europe have been the subjects of several studies.<sup>8</sup> As an example, Liza Candidi’s essay takes us to Berlin after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Candidi concentrates on the formation and transformation of urban minorities after the collapse of the regime, analysing the effects of the reunification of the city. The new minority, which was formed immediately after the Wall came down, was made up of Germans from the eastern sector of the city who now found themselves caught up in a radical transformation driven by the economy, politics, and the worldview held by the western part of the city. Communist East Germany was condemned and wiped out; but it had been a collective point of reference – whether positive or negative – for the inhabitants of East Berlin who had grown up, lived, and been shaped by life there. The collective history and individual memories of the citizens of the eastern sector, and their relative poverty compared with the other Germans of the city, created a difference, strongly influencing identification tendencies and generating a new minority. Candidi focuses attention on how a redefinition of symbolic content and memory of urban space is developed on the basis of this cultural diversity. The article reads the transformations of the place-names, demolition of buildings, construction or rebuilding of other buildings not only as a way of rewriting the past

8. See in particular: R. Brubaker, et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 119-63.

and reorganising social life, but also as the site of a conflict of collective memory and identity. The protagonists of this conflict concerning memory are the political and economic forces that have been rebuilding Berlin since 1989, which can be thought of as emanating from the western part of the city, and the resistance expressed by the population of the former eastern sector, which finds itself somehow deprived of its own recent past. The individual experiences of the citizens of East Berlin, read in the context of the hierarchy of values of the reunified city, appear to be negative, inferior, and out of date. The urban morphology reveals the successful changes as well as those that were resisted. The new collective identity created in the city makes reference to a common past that cannot be either the Nazi or the Communist and, therefore, seems to erase the 20th century altogether to reach back to the splendours of Prussia.

*5. Transnational relations and urban changes:  
The Roma between Romania and Italy*

Pietro Cingolani writes about the Roma minority in certain villages and towns in Romania. His study investigates how this minority redefined itself after the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime, and the traces of change visible on the urban territory. The starting point of the essay analyses the condition and social position of the Roma during the socialist era. Despite the strong assimilation policies of that period and the lack of formal recognition of the existence of their community, the Roma were identifiable as a minority in that they held onto cultural features and occupied jobs in the city that were specific to them, at least in part. Their prevalent work, however, was in the agricultural cooperatives, occupation that was by no means exclusive. The Roma carried out economic activities that required the accumulation of traditional skills and a capacity to adapt yet when they were employed in jobs not considered “theirs,” they were forced to provide unskilled labour.

In the urban territory and in the villages, the Roma tended to occupy specific areas, thus highlighting the existence of an affinity at the base of the community and differentiation from others. The boundary between the Roma and the non-Roma, the *gagé*, was continually subject to re-negotiation, as generally happens in the relationships between minorities and the predominant population; but it was reasserted continuously both by the Roma and by

the *gagé*. This diversity was based on an asymmetrical interdependence, by which the Roma provided services to the non-Roma society.

The position of the Roma in the socialist period reiterates what we have already met among the Lyuli in Samarkand. The focus of Cingolani's study, however, introduces us to new ground, which is very significant and not examined in the case of the Lyuli. The collapse of the regime opened migratory paths for the Roma community, linking their places of origin with the destinations of these migration flows, in this case, Turin and Genoa. Cingolani investigates the transnational relationships created in this way, and sees them as the driving force behind the changes that have affected the Roma community in Romania in the last twenty years. During this period, Roma families in Romanian cities have been moving from the periphery to the centre and settling in urban spaces that used to be exclusively *gagé*. This shift has been made possible thanks to money accumulated by the emigrants, which was then used to buy or build new houses. Roma claims to these spaces are a source of tension with the *gagé*, who tend to look with hostility on the growth of the Roma presence, formerly kept at a distance in neighbourhoods or housing on the edge of town. In this way, new dynamics develop in the relations between Roma in Romania and Roma who have emigrated, involving the spaces they occupy and their economic activities, and implicating the re-negotiation of their relationships with the *gagé*.

## *6. Appropriation of urban resources and property rights: Ksamil*

In Francesco Vietti's essay, we move across the Balkans into Albania. The case in question, Ksamil, is a small city on the coast, a few kilometres from Greece. Here, the collapse of the communist regime has also produced a new dynamic, which led to a division in the population and a redefinition of the minorities and majorities in the urban territory. In a way similar to the case examined by Cingolani, these new dynamics are connected to emigration, which plays a fundamental role in the social and physical transformation of the city. Ksamil has very recent origins, founded as model village in the socialist era and created by the labour of young workers from all over Albania. The inhabitants of the socialist model village are referred to today as the 'old inhabitants' with respect to a new population that arrived after the collapse of the regime. Vietti has studied this popula-

tion and its transformative effect on the town. He reconstructs its origins, investigates how these have led to localised settlements in the urban territory, and considers the housing built as expressions of the solid hold of the families rooted in the city. Financial backing for these building operations has arrived from the new inhabitants' transnational ties. Large houses have been constructed with rooms for the sons and daughters, including those abroad, and with rooms to let. Ksamil has become an important tourist centre and, thanks to this tourism economy, the city is being transformed and attracting new inhabitants. The race towards an increasingly intensive urbanisation transforms orchards and gardens into built-up areas: housing, shops, restaurants, and hotels. However, this transformation rests on the vulnerable foundation of vaguely defined and contested property rights. Thus, new citizens involved in the expansion of the city often refer to traditional rules established by the *kanun* due to inadequate legislation defining new property patterns with any certainty. In 2006, however, legislation was introduced to define the criteria used to establish whether buildings have been legally or illegally built. In 2010 bulldozers moved in and demolished hundreds of houses, reducing the urban landscape to post-war devastation. Tourism fell drastically and relationships between the minorities present in the city were re-negotiated.

### *7. War, citizenship rights, and home ownership: Sarajevo*

In her essay Zaira Tiziana Lofranco addresses issues presented in the previous studies: the “nationalisation” of urban spaces and rights to private home ownership. The first question provides a background, while deeper analysis tackles the question of access to housing and home-ownership, an important topic investigated in other Central and Eastern European cities.<sup>9</sup>

9. On housing privatization, see: S. Mandič, “Trends in Central East European Rented Sectors,” *Journal of Housing and Build Environment*, 1 (2000), pp. 217-31; R. M. Buckley, S. Tsenkova, “Housing Market Systems in Reforming Socialist Economies: Comparative Indicators of Performance and Policy,” *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 1: 2 (2001), pp. 257-89; N. Pichler-Milanovich, “Urban Housing Markets in Central and Eastern Europe: Convergence, Divergence or Policy ‘Collapse,’” *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 1: 2 (2001), pp. 145-87; S. Tsenkova, B. Turner, “The Future of Social Housing in Eastern Europe: Reforms in Latvia and Ukraine,” *European Journal of Housing Policy*, 4: 2 (2004), pp. 133-49; S. Loew, S. Tsenkova, eds., *Housing Change in East and Central Europe* (Al-

Lofranco draws our attention to a particular situation in Sarajevo after the war that broke out at the time of the break-up of Yugoslavia. Here the break with the past has been more abrupt than in the contexts we have looked at so far, and the divisions within the population are more deeply felt.

The end of Yugoslavism, i.e. the integration of the various populations of Yugoslavia, was clean-cut and irreversible, and came about through unspeakable violence. Everyone, from the peaceful elements of the population to the armed militias and armies, was involved. The war and one of its instruments and main objectives, the subsequent ethnic cleansing, broke down the state of Yugoslavia into reciprocally opposing and hostile national territories, leaving a heavy legacy for future rebuilding. Nationalist domination by majorities, now masters of their own states, and pressure on minorities became radicalised beyond precedent. On this foundation of unmediated hostility, the national states, heirs of the former Yugoslavia, were built.

In 1995 the Dayton Agreement brought the war to a close and terminated the violence that had split Bosnia Herzegovina, of which Sarajevo is the capital, into ethnically homogeneous territories. Pacification, therefore, originated from a context built on ethnic cleansing, but was intended to correct this in two areas: by setting up a new political authority and by favouring the return of refugees. In the first instance, no better solution was found than to create a state divided into two political entities: the Serbian Republika Srpska (RS) and the Croat-Muslim Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). A joint political authority governed over a territory fragmented into mono-ethnic regions, towns, and cantons. While a useful compromise to the end of the war, it was incapable of reuniting the fractured country. In this context, the most important issue became the return of refugees.<sup>10</sup>

dershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004); G. Cinà, *Bucarest dal villaggio alla metropoli. Identità urbana e nuove tendenze* (Milan: Unicopli, 2005), pp. 147-65; S. Tsenkova, *Housing Policy Reforms in Post-Socialist Europe: Lost in Transition (Contributions to Economics Series)* (Heidelberg: Springer Physica Verlag, 2009); C. Tonini (ed.), *Riforme, espropri, restituzioni. Sistemi di proprietà nel XX secolo* (Rome: Aracne, 2011), esp. the essays by S. Bottoni on Hungary, pp. 169-206 and M. Varani on Estonia, pp. 207-32.

10. Migration had taken place between the regions of Bosnia Herzegovina, as well as to other Yugoslav republics and abroad. Along with the great mass of refugees from the war there were others in flight from the Nato bombing in Serbia in 1998-99. Bosnia Herzegovina had about 4 million inhabitants before the war, more than half of whom were forced to abandon their homes during the course of the war. Repatriation began in 2000 and within ten years about one million people had returned. The majority of those who returned

Sarajevo had been the centre of war, violence, flight, and exile. The siege of the city, begun in April 1992, lasted for four years. In 1991 the city counted 362,000 inhabitants, in 1998, 275,000. Despite huge losses, the “Bosniak,” or Muslims, passed from a total of half to three quarters of the population.<sup>11</sup>

Lingering hostilities impeded many from returning to their homes, and others who had taken temporary shelter during the emergency and then stayed on were forced to move out. Zaira Lofranco investigates the repatriations, subsequent appropriation, and re-appropriation of houses in two neighbourhoods in Sarajevo. The Dayton Agreement and repatriation policies have aimed at regulating access to property on the basis of recognition of pre-war ownership rights. But since it was not possible to reconstruct these rights, claims emerged which were not recognised in the local contexts where the expectations connected with national identities predominated. The redefinition of rights to property and, therefore, to continued residence in a given territory, has thus come about through a complex tangle of regulations, administrative procedures, legal and illegal methods, and discrimination.

Two processes, both potential causes of contrast, came about at the same time: return to previously inhabited properties and the privatisation of home ownership. Before the war, when Yugoslav socialism was still in place, the majority of homes constituted “social” ownership, i.e. they belonged to the State or to self-managed companies. Just as in other countries, privatisation became a further cause of injustice within territories that had become mono-ethnic.

We have thus touched on cities thousands of kilometres apart, from the edge of China to the border of Italy. In each territory we have encountered cities undergoing transformation, migratory flows of unprecedented numbers, and transformations in languages and cultures. And all of this has occurred in the course of only two decades.

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settled in cantons, villages or towns of their own nationality, confirming that the results of the ethnic cleansing were substantially irreversible. The data can be found in [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org), website of the UNHCR, accessed on August 6, 2012.

11. Website of the city of Sarajevo, [www.sarajevo.ba](http://www.sarajevo.ba), accessed on August 6, 2012.

GIULIA PANICCIARI

## Almaty as a New Kazakh City: Kazakhisation of Urban Spaces After Independence\*

Like other ex-Soviet republics, Kazakhstan has undergone a process of profound economic, political, and social transformation, which has seen the introduction of a market economy; in addition, as we shall see, to the introduction of a new political discourse focused on legitimisation of a new power system and efforts to build a cohesive society in a context where ethnicity has become a way to translate concepts of citizenship.

The factors influencing the formation of a new society out of the remains of the former Soviet society can be observed in the ex-capital Almaty, a major pole of attraction for the citizens of the republic, for both cultural and economic reasons. Using Almaty as an example, I will show how social issues are at times interpreted as “the rights of the Kazakhs” by a part of the community which re-uses the ambiguous official rhetoric on Kazakh culture as the central, constitutive element of the identity of the new independent state. Such rhetoric is visible in this post-Soviet city, especially in the re-organisation of its monumental patrimony, where Soviet monuments, still central to the collective imagination, have been placed side by side with new symbols representing *Kazakhness*. I argue that Almaty has no cohesive community, not only because of persistent social and economic inequalities, but because the role of *Kazakhness* fails to create new civic and universal values.<sup>1</sup> The boundaries that develop inside urban

\* This is an extract from my PhD project on the transformation of a multi-ethnic society in transition from the Soviet to the post-Soviet period.

1. During the Stalinist period, the city became a symbol of modernity and progress, forging an industrialised and urbanised working class in contrast with the socio-economic system of the native population based on transhumant pastoralism and agriculture. According to the Marxist theories, re-appropriated by the Bolsheviks, the Kazakhs were a backward people, who needed help to evolve and access the new urban society. In this way, the



space are characterised by a socio-cultural division between those citizens who are Russian-speakers and more integrated in the globalising economic system, and those who are Kazakh speakers and who feel excluded. Consequently, at times social tensions are interpreted as “a Kazakh question” and are discussed by national government institutions in such terms.

Brubaker notes that everyday experience is connected much more with concerns about employment and strategies for self-advancement. Only occasionally are such concerns seen in terms of ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> He shows how “[...] state policies, political struggles, organisational practices, social movements, and cultural discourses significantly shape everyday categorisation processes and practices.”<sup>3</sup> This insight sheds light on the effects of a post-Soviet discourse in which majorities and minorities are re-positioned and re-imagined.

Since the ratification of the constitution in 1995, we can monitor how the president and the media have promoted an ideal *Kazakh* nation – often referred to as “the titular nation” – and, at the same time, a *Kazakhstani* one, where “Kazakhstani” includes all former Soviet citizens (regardless of the ethnic affiliation) who were accorded full citizenship soon after independence.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the question of developing a new independent nation has turned into a question of defining the role of Kazakhs and minorities living in Kazakhstan. By creating new prototypes and myths, the State emphasises the common past of Kazakh and non-Kazakh peoples, placing the legend of the natural peaceful character of the former, whose main quality is their tolerance towards the historical minorities living in Kazakhstan, at the centre of the national discourse, and thus promoting a discourse of *inclusive* nationalism.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, the State legitimises the

community forming inside this Soviet city acquired new values associated with the ideas of progress and modernity sponsored by the Bolsheviks. As the city was not founded by the Kazakhs, whose presence there was limited for a long period of time, such social values were associated with a Russian-speaking and ethnically-mixed community, whereas the Kazakh social and cultural universe was associated with the countryside and the idea of backwardness and ethnic particularism.

2. R. Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 206-7.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

4. See B. Dave, A. Kusainova, G. Gleason, “Constitutional reform and regional politics in Kazakhstan,” *Nationalities Papers*, 26: 3 (1998), p. 534; see also S. N. Cummings, “Legitimation and Identification in Kazakhstan,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 12: 2 (2006), pp. 177-204.

5. We often meet this repetitive rhetoric in journals or the media. For instance, the newspaper *Vechernii Almaty*, celebrated the memory of the Germans who had lived in

main role played by *Kazakhness* as a sort of guarantor of civic values over any other understanding of “citizenship.” My own fieldwork has shown that this discourse is re-interpreted on the local street level in the creation of new sources of confrontation, though not necessarily between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs. Indeed, in my case study of post-Soviet Almaty, growing social inequalities connected with access to education and employment have led to tensions between those citizens living in the centre and those living in the periphery of the city where the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural background is very different. Assuming that these tensions are primarily social and then reinterpreted in an ethnic language, our primary question is: what effect does the new nationalism have on the urban community at large and on the Kazakhs in particular? Therefore, in surveying the historical background of the post-Soviet, I have structured my paper as follows: firstly, we will consider official discourse on Kazakh/Kazakhstani identity as applied to the constructed memory of the city (architectural and monumental patrimony and re-appropriation of public spaces,) along with the view “from the street,” where inhabitants perceive, use or do not use those spaces. I will then investigate in more depth the social and economic background of the inhabitants sheds more light on their experience of the city. Lastly, I will conclude my analysis with observations on how a new neighbourhood, *Shanyrak*, situated on the periphery of Almaty, reveals some important aspects of the recent urbanisation trends to understand how they become ultimately a Kazakh question and how the institutions respond to emergent social conflicts.

The city of Almaty was studied in the 1990s and early 2000s by a number of western anthropologists: Catherine Alexander’s work focuses on property and state/population issues, while Joma Nazpary concentrates on one neighbourhood as a way of investigating the chaos of post-Soviet Kazakhstan from a perspective that illustrates the point of view of the most marginalised individuals.<sup>6</sup> Saulesh Yessenova’s study investigates the nature of the Kazakh identity throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet period,

the city, and remembered their deportation and the safety they found among the Kazakhs (*Vechernii Almaty*, September 3, 2011). The same can be found in the television program “*My Kazakhstansy*” (We, Kazakhstanis), where guests from minority groups share their positive experiences in Kazakhstan in standardised language.

6. J. Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos. Violence and Dispossession in Kazakhstan* (London: Pluto Press, 2002); C. Alexander, V. Buchli, C. Humphrey, eds., *Urban Life in Post-Soviet Asia* (London: Routledge, 2007), C. Alexander, “Waste Under Socialism and After: A Case Study from Almaty,” in H. G. West et al., *Enduring Socialism. Explorations of Rev-*

while also focusing on the rural/urban worlds.<sup>7</sup> Their work has provided a foundation for continued research into the nature of post-Soviet societies.

### 1. *Privatisation and social change after the collapse of the Soviet Union*

Since the collapse of the Soviet state apparatus, Almaty has undergone a sort of “Kazakhisation” process in various sectors of cultural and political life. Kazakhs have been promoted in the public sphere where they are now the majority; as an example, in the universities the number of Kazakh professors has increased considerably, and new Kazakh schools have opened. Inscriptions on buildings are now in Kazakh, and in some public institutions (libraries, archives, public offices, etc.), Kazakh is the only language used.<sup>8</sup> Most Soviet-named streets have been reassigned Kazakh names, street signs in Kazakh are now subtitled with Russian translations, and the names of historical personages who have become representative of Kazakh cultural heritage in a revisited national history have become more common; for instance, the State University and a main street have been named after the scholar Abu Nasr Al-Farabi.<sup>9</sup>

Almaty originated from a small and peripheral colonial town, built by and for the Russians. During seventy years of Soviet governance, it established itself as a socialist city with Russian features, since the majority of the population was Russian-speaking. For many decades, the Kazakh presence was limited, at least until the late 1970s, when the urban space increased thanks to the inclusion of several *kolkhozes*, *sovkhoses* and *auls* (villages), many of which had a predominantly Kazakh population.<sup>10</sup> Post-Soviet political changes accelerated some dynamics that had already be-

*olution and Transformation, Restoration and Continuation* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

7. S. Yessenova, *The Politics and Poetics of the Nation: Urban Narratives of Kazakh Identity* (McGill University, PhD dissertation, 2003).

8. The Kazakh language has become the state language, whereas Russian has acquired an ambiguous status of official language or language of inter-ethnic communication.

9. Abu Nasr Al-Farabi (b. 870) was an Arab philosopher who lived before the formation of a Kazakh state in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, he has been declared the father of the Kazakh culture. See E. Schatz, “Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict in Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan,” in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 6: 2 (2000), pp. 71-94, and note 23, p. 92.

10. Interview with an Almaty city planner, March 2011.

gun in the previous period: economic crisis became increasingly visible in the townships and remote industrial centres of the country, leading to an increasing urbanisation in bigger and more important centres like Almaty. The collapse of the Soviet Union required the state proceed with important and abrupt reforms. Privatisation then seemed the solution to the failure of Socialism. But in reality, it further destabilised a society already experiencing social and economic insecurity.

In the Almaty of the 1990s we witnessed changes in administrative borders with the inclusion of neighbouring villages, independent settlements, *kolkhozes*, and *sovkhozes*. Furthermore, rather chaotic privatisation and the unregulated introduction of a market economy, as well as milder migration policies, occurred. Privatisation came in the form of a “shock therapy package” involving housing and industries, along the example of other ex communist states.<sup>11</sup> Privatisation was everywhere and everyone got involved. In fact, the entirely unregulated privatisation process led to the creation of huge inequalities among the population, and those who could rely on solid networks to conduct business enjoyed significant advantages. Privatisation was conducted in a moment of profound economic crisis, as the entire Soviet economic system had collapsed and no welfare could be provided by the state. Alexander describes the chaotic 1990s, when people burnt materials stolen from abandoned houses for warmth and lack of work and salary delays created critical health and social conditions throughout the population. Joma Nazpary also describes the post-Soviet chaos with an emphasis on the polarisation between the new rich (*novye bogatye*) and the dispossessed (*bednye*), i.e. those who were excluded from not only the individual privileges that privatisation could grant, but also the collective domain that accorded social status and access to resources.<sup>12</sup>

It appears that the main beneficiaries of privatisation in the 1990s were ethnic Kazakhs belonging to the powerful Soviet political elite.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet elite had seen a consistent shift in Kazakh presence since the time of Kunaev (who became first secretary in the two-year period 1960-1962 and then again for a longer period in 1964-1986), when ethnic Kazakhs were

11. Alexander, “Waste Under Socialism and After,” p. 154.

12. Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos*, p. 14. He refers also to C. Humphrey in “Myth-making Narratives and the Dispossessed in Russia,” *Cambridge Anthropology*, 19: 2 (1996), pp. 70-92.

13. For more details, see J. Murphy, “Illusory Transition? Elite Reconstruction in Kazakhstan 1989-2002,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 58: 4 (2006), p. 530.

promoted in local party and government organs, gradually coming to occupy senior positions. This trend was maintained until Nazarbayev became first secretary of the Communist Party.<sup>14</sup> Although the key government and CP posts still counted a slight Russian majority, the collapse of the Soviet Union saw the Soviet Kazakh elite confirm their political position and transform their social capital into economic capital.<sup>15</sup>

Privatisation was to be implemented through the distribution to the population of vouchers for deposit in holding companies. These could buy up to 20% of the state enterprises; but it appears that of 170 companies, 20 accumulated 60% of the vouchers and another 19 accumulated 20%.<sup>16</sup> Pre-existing inequalities reflecting differentiated access to resources were now increasing, as those who could access them, could also now own them and the positions of power associated with them.

Privatisation also applied to housing and, therefore, involved a broader range of the population. By law every worker would receive coupons on the basis of the number of years worked, which s/he could either sell or use to buy housing.<sup>17</sup> This encouraged many old residents of Almaty, who decided to privatise their flats, to stay in their old neighbourhood. At the same time, those who wanted to leave – mainly Europeans – could sell their flats to buyers with the means and desire to live in the centre. A young Kazakh woman, daughter of a professor, who still lives in the centre, told me that her family was, at the time, probably the only Kazakh family in their building and that in the early 1990s many Russians sold their flats to well-off Kazakhs, who are now her neighbours. This was not uncommon. This tendency created a new kind of social and economic differentiation inside the city and changed, as we shall see, the perception of certain neighbourhoods. The rich and poor districts of the city seem today to have parallel and distinct lives with the less well-off areas undergoing territorial stigmatisation: classified by the population as extremely dangerous and underdeveloped.

We shall now see how these changes, together with a new vision of the city produced by the power elite, influence social and cultural experience within the city.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 533.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 525, 533-4, 540.

16. Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos*, p. 37.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

## 2. *Kazakhisation of physical and symbolic spaces*

We start our journey in the new city of Almaty on a virtual visit to some public places that have been transformed or reinterpreted by new architectural projects. Some central parts of Almaty are described through the comments of the city residents I interviewed during my fieldwork. I find that although they are not representative of the whole population in Almaty, they express quite well the attitudes towards the constructed space in the city. I decided to start my analysis by observing two central squares of the city because they can help us understand “social relations and social practice in social space.”<sup>18</sup> Following Low’s distinction between a produced and a constructed social space, the centre of Almaty and its monuments can be interpreted both as *produced* social spaces aimed at making the ex-capital a modern, global urban centre – the historical site of an ethnic majority – and, at the same time, a space that produces universal values for the inhabitants. Moreover, it can also be considered a *constructed* social space where the community can seek social and cultural interaction. By observing the reactions of people as social actors and the meanings they give to their experience of the public spaces rebuilt after independence, we can understand the processes that have led to the social polarisation of the city along with role ethnicity has played, both as part of official policy and as part of daily practice. As public spaces in the city have been reinvented, they tell us about the symbols through which social and ethnic perceptions have been created.

One day in February 2011 I was walking down the street with two Uyghur women, whose children had just married, heading to a family reunion in a neighbourhood known as an Uyghur *mahalla*, an ex-*sovskhoz* formerly called “*Druzhba*,” now translated in Kazakh as “*Dostyk*,” both meaning “friendship.” Zhanet and Aida were complaining about the Kazakhs, the way they behave, and their continual harassment of other residents, especially Uyghurs. While we were crossing a small street, Aida, a guest like me and, therefore, unfamiliar with the neighbourhood, noticed the street sign: *Volgo-gradskaya*. She started laughing and went on to explain that she was amused

18. S. M. Low, “Spatializing Culture. The Social Production and Social Construction of Public Space in Costa Rica,” in *Theorizing the City: the New Urban Anthropology Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2005 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press,) p. 111. I have found Low’s ethnographic study of public spaces useful in the formulation my observations.

precisely because of the Russian name, and she wondered out loud if the Kazakhs had run out of Kazakh heroes. This was not the first time I had heard jokes about street names and this episode reminded me of the times I had heard someone speaking with a taxi driver about a destination and could not remember the new name of the street, saying in the end something sarcastic like: “*Ne pomnyu, kakoy-to Batyr!*” (“I don’t remember! It’s some *batyr!*”)<sup>19</sup>

The same sense of irony is typical of comments about the new monuments. While I was making conversation with a Russian architectural historian, she started complaining about the limited knowledge of the new city builders and their lack of taste both when restructuring old Soviet buildings and when building new ones, which has given Almaty a new invented face that makes no sense. She proceeded to show me the central mosque that had been built in a completely reinvented, pseudo-oriental or pseudo-Turkish style. She then named another example to show the contradictory and unintelligible new face of the city, which was changed to look modern and un-Soviet: the “Cinema Towers,” two skyscrapers built on the south border of the city centre and now hosting a cinema, concert hall, and offices. She was very sceptical about the fact that they were given an English name and wondered ironically why they had not been given a Kazakh name. She then laughed about the fact that actually it was not possible to give them a Kazakh name because it would have sounded ridiculous: “I wonder why they did not translate it in Kazakh as well?!” [laughing] What would be the Kazakh for it? It would be very funny in Kazakh! [thinking] It would be “*Kinomunalar*”... ehm, “*Kinomunaralar*,” literally. In Russian it would be “*Kinominarety*.” [She bursts out laughing.] “Also in Russian it wouldn’t sound so good, “*Kinobashni*,” funny, isn’t it? Do you understand what I mean?” She went on telling me about the new independence monument, calling the statue at the top of it, the “*altyn adam*” (the golden man), “the man on the barge.”<sup>20</sup> The historian’s attitude is similar to that of other people who tended to speak with me about the older monuments as the most interesting parts of the city centre and did not mention the independence monument at all.

19. *Batyr* means hero or warrior in Kazakh and is attached to the names of a series of streets that have been renamed after historical Kazakh heroes (*Bogenbay batyr*, *Karasay batyr*, *Kabanbay batyr*, *Nauryzbay batyr*, etc.). These streets are located in the centre and quite close to each other. An acquaintance of mine, also a foreigner, who had witnessed a similar scene, noticed the same kind of humour. Nazapary, too, describes similar scenes.

20. Conversation with E. H., February 2011.



That same independence monument became the destination on a tour I took in the city with a Kazakh young man, Khanat, who wanted to show me the city centre. He was very proud of it and for him it was the most important symbol of the city.<sup>21</sup> Khanat had arrived in Almaty with his brothers after leaving Turkestan, a smaller town southeast of Almaty. Both he and his brothers were working in Almaty as builders or guards and studying.<sup>22</sup> He rarely visited this part of the city and took me there because it was a “special” occasion. An office employee in the central *akimat* (city hall) also took me to see the independence monument while we were driving to another destination. He stopped by the monument to show me the symbol of the city and the place where the 1986 riots, later interpreted as independence demonstrations, began. As I shall explain later, the real dynamics of the event are still unknown. Yet, many people refer to the riots as an important moment in the history of independence in Kazakhstan. Like Khanat, Azamat, the office employee, came from another town, Shimkent, further east from Turkestan, and had moved to Almaty only recently. I was shown this monument with great pride by many taxi drivers, who had recently immigrated into the city from rural or smaller urban centres. While these cases are not representative of the entire population, taste being subjective, these attitudes did make me think that perceptions of some public spaces and their intended messages are influenced by social position or ethnic affiliation, and might be a reflection of a desire to integrate or conquer feelings of alienation.

The centre I have just described through the eyes of my interlocutors has undergone a drastic change in its social composition and aesthetics. As I indicate above, many flats located in this area have been sold to residents with economic means (most of whom are Kazakhs from the ex-Soviet elite) and part of its territory has gone to private companies that are building new business centres and new Dubai-like skyscrapers for the wealthy (oligarchs and foreigners).<sup>23</sup> At the same time, many houses dating from the 1940s and 1950s have remained, and most families who used to live in

21. Almaty is commonly represented by the image of the Monument of Independence.

22. Their social network was very similar to that of other migrants, as Yessenova describes in her study, i.e. besides the brothers, it included other migrants from outside the city, whom they had met often in mostly in the work place. Yessenova, *The Politics and Poetics of the Nation*, p. 161.

23. Private companies are very strong and their influence is a main factor in the gentrification of some central districts of the city.

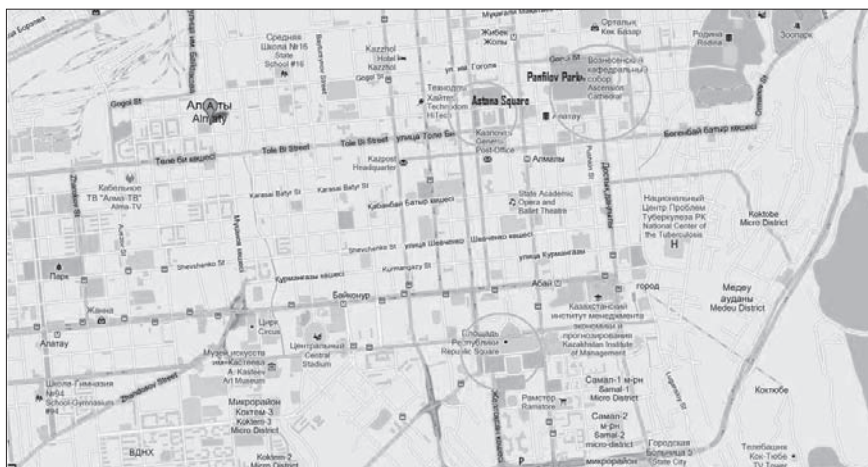


the area before independence have remained. Many of them constituted the old Soviet *intelligentsia*.

Together with these economic and social changes (privatisation and gentrification of the centre), we see that some urban policies have aimed at turning Almaty from a Soviet and Russian-speaking capital into a multi-ethnic and, at the same time, Kazakh post-industrial city. We can observe this nationalising trend in the urban language (monumental patrimony and propaganda) and in the reconstruction of public spaces such as my interlocutors describe above. The centre is being modified by a new vision, perpetrated by the state, where modernity mixes with new and old myths: the myth of the Second World War, the myth of independence, the myth of the president, and the myth of the Kazakh people.

The old administrative Soviet centre and its symbols have been re-organised according to this new vision. The re-imagination of the symbolic spaces has been accompanied by a strong reminiscence of the Soviet idea of internationalism, an architectural language the old Soviet urban residents are familiar with. The two central squares of the city – the old Soviet administrative centre (Astana Square today) and the current administrative centre (Republic Square) – are characterised by monumental ensembles narrating the historical myths of the nation/motherland, in part recalling typical Soviet moments, to the inhabitants. In the old administrative centre, built between the 1940s and the 1950s, the Soviet symbols have been in some way nationalised. This centre is composed of the old square facing the ex-Government Building (*Dom Pravitel'stva*), today a private British Kazakhstani University. Eastward, we find Panfilov Park and, in the area around these two sites, a few secondary administrative buildings and private offices, as well as part of the cultural institutions, such as the Opera and Ballet Theatre, built in the 1930s. The Panfilov Park still hosts the colonial Russian Orthodox Cathedral and the monument to the twenty-eight heroes of the Panfilov division during the Second World War, some of whom were from Kazakhstan.

The statue of Lenin in front of the Government Building was replaced by the monument to two heroines of the Second World War, Alia Moldagulova and Manshuk Mametova, two Kazakh soldiers who died on the battlefield. In this case, we might say that a typical Soviet monument representing power has been replaced by a more 'Kazakh' one recalling the Soviet past: the Second World War has long been a unifying symbol for the urban population. In that period, Almaty was the destination for deportees, factories, and cadres evacuated from the war zones, dramatically changing



Map 1. City centre.

the city's population, and often causing conflicts with the older inhabitants and the autochthonous population. However, at the same time, the Kazakhs and other Central Asia peoples were sent to the front to defend their homeland from the Nazis. In those years, propaganda forged a new patriotism and sense of heroism based on the idea of sacrifice for the homeland. When Kazakh soldiers came back from the front, they had learnt Russian and shared sentiments of fear, as well as heroism, with people of different ethnic origins, who identified themselves as Soviet. Moreover, the evacuated factories developed a sense of pride for having provided the front with munitions and equipment. This explains why the war period and its monuments remain in the collective imagination as an important moment. Today, it is not the Soviet people who celebrate the memory of the veterans, but a new Eurasian people who won the war because they were united against a common enemy with bravery and love of country. Public speeches by the veterans and other public figures on Victory Day (May 9) recall moments of heroism and emphasise the role of the "great Kazakh people" who fought at the front and, at the same time, welcomed the evacuated and deported populations to its land.

The old Soviet administrative centre has now lost its main function, but remains a gathering place for pensioners and young people during festivals celebrating the city, Victory Day or Republic Day.



Image 1. People in front of Alia and Manshuk's monument during a city festival.



Image 2. A veteran posing for a photograph on Victory Day, 2012.



Image 3. Statue of Lenin now replaced by Alia and Manshuk.

Image 4. People standing in front of the monument of the twenty-eight heroes of the Panfilov Division, on Victory Day, 2010.

Image 5. Posing for a photograph on Victory Day, 2010.





Image 6. The Independence Monument.

The new administrative centre was planned and developed under the influence of Kunaev, the ex first secretary of the CP, who held power for nearly two decades under Brezhnev's protectorate, but is seen by everyone as a charismatic figure who took care of the city and supported its modernisation.<sup>24</sup> The area is permeated with recent memories of his personality cult, though there are no monuments dedicated to him. Today the area is also one of the most recent and exclusive districts, where skyscrapers and financial centres are being erected. Compared to the old square, here the urban rhetoric insists on Kazakh decorative elements as the new symbols of the city, emphasising the idea of the centrality of the Kazakh people in independent Kazakhstan and the figure of the president, who has become a contemporary myth among past *Kazakhicised* historical myths. Kazakh decorations appear on the high column of the Independence Monument and in the human allegories surrounding it. A solemn "golden man" (*altyn adam*) represents the ancient origins of the Kazakhs, whose story is narrated in the iconographies located around the monumental complex.<sup>25</sup>

24. In this period his influence on the city was strong. Many sites in the city are connected with his image, such as the sport centre in the mountains (*Medeu*) or Republic Square. As one architect once told me: under Kunaev nothing was built without his permission.

25. The *altyn adam*, the object of the historian's irony, is an archaeological find from Issyk kurgan (a group of ancient tombs found 50 km east from Almaty), whose meaning



Image 7. A girl touching the president's hand for good luck.



Image 8. Bas-relief showing President Nazarbaev.



Image 9. A girl posing in front of the “Dawn of Freedom”.

Nearby the “Dawn of Freedom” monument (*Rassvet Svobody*), installed in 2006, commemorates the riots that took place in December 1986 when the Russian Gennadii Kolbin replaced Kunaev. A crowd of young people, apparently mostly Kazakh students, gathered in the square and held a two-day protest on the streets to oppose Moscow’s decision.<sup>26</sup> Still today,

remains a mystery. Nonetheless, the find has become a symbol of the “strong power of the State on the land of the Kazakhs,” as declared by the official website of this district, the *Bostandyk rayon* (district): [http://bostandyk.almaty.kz/page.php?page\\_id=317&lang=1](http://bostandyk.almaty.kz/page.php?page_id=317&lang=1), last accessed in September 2011.

26. Many witnesses told me that the city seemed to be under siege, as the police checked all education buildings and dormitories. It is not clear whether the protest was spontaneous or planned by people within the same political elite; neither is the real number of victims of the repressions that followed known. Apparently, 10,000 troops were called to contain the riots. Official accounts report that 2,400 people were arrested, 2 died during the protests and another 2 Kazakh youths were sentenced to death. Mukhtar Shakhnov, an intellectual and political opponent – famous for his nationalist declarations – reported that 3 people died in the riots, 3 in jail and at least 58 were summarily executed. See M. B. Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1995), pp. 252-3.

the *Zheltoksan* (Kazakh for ‘December’) remains a delicate and obscure issue, in part because a younger Nazarbaev appeared in support of Moscow and in opposition to Kunaev. Most Kazakhstani citizens, who blame Moscow for wanting to carry out colonial policies, have mythologised 1986. Perhaps for this reason the square itself has a strong impact on the population, especially the Kazakhs, who tend to interpret the Soviet past as a colonial regime and these obscure riots as the beginning of a movement for independence.

According to my observations in the field, both Astana and Republic Squares are considered almost equally as symbols of the new city. Nonetheless, they communicate different values that resonate with certain groups more than others. The urban language, in general, echoes the effects of the Soviet legacy, by creating myths out of historical episodes and re-using the same decorative and folkloric art adopted in the Soviet period. People in Almaty were equally likely to be photographed in front of Panfilov Park monument, as they were to imitate the allegory of the “*Rassvet Svobody*.” At the same time, Panfilov Park evokes a sense of nostalgia in people like the historian who spoke above with a mix of contradictory feelings about the Soviet past that took away some members of her family and, at the same time, somehow created order. And “the golden man” is fascinating to my Kazakh interlocutors who recognize in it a symbol and an object of Kazakh art. Kunaev is praised both by the Kazakh interlocutors who see in him a leader of the Kazakh people, and by the historian and other Russian speakers, who recognise a charismatic politician who modernized the city.

### 3. *Who is the city for?*

We have seen how the official political vision of the city, as perpetrated by the state, changes perception of the urban landscape in complex ways. This suggests an important question: who is the city for? This question does not concern the policy-makers as much as the recipients of the official vision, who live in the city and use the public spaces. The inhabitants of the city perceive certain messages and react to them, influencing considerably the social and cultural dynamics in the city. City planners and architects I have spoken with are concerned about the low quality of the new constructions, as well as the bad taste of the monumental art. Moreover, many respondents insisted on the *before*, when the city was planned to be a



pleasant place, versus the *now*, when new threatening factors loom over the city. These factors are identified with the semi-legal actions of businessmen who destroy the Soviet houses in the centre and replace them with skyscrapers in contrast with the official urban plans. Many inhabitants, and not only urban planners, are completely ignorant of what happens in the urban construction sites. For them Almaty's problems are exacerbated by the many peripheral neighbourhoods called *Shanyraki* and *Kakhalmany*,<sup>27</sup> whose construction also appears mysterious. The feeling is that money rules in the centre, whereas desperation rules in the periphery.

In general, residents seem not to notice the Kazakh *leitmotiv* of the monuments and the old Soviet celebrations as much as I did. But it is also significant that part of these residents, namely Russian-speaking and relatively old city dwellers, rarely mention the newest monuments as part of the central city landscape, often recalling the old and "nice" Panfilov Park and the Soviet houses. I think that in some way they see the Kazakhs as the "titular nation," as they were meant to be also during the Soviet period. At the same time, the irony the *Almatynts*y (old Almaty city dwellers) use to describe the cityscape is a sign of their alienation before a landscape that cannot belong entirely to them. This is also confirmed by their silence on the new monuments, unless they want to poke fun. Ethnicity becomes explicit in their considerations when they speak about the powerful businessmen and the political elite or about the marginalised, both groups they often identify as Kazakhs. The mysterious businessmen have economic and political power, and therefore must be Kazakhs, as they are the main beneficiaries of the power elite. In the same way, when these same residents notice that Almaty is "dirtier," "more chaotic," "uneducated," they blame the rural migrants who have moved to the ex-capital since the late 1980s in search of jobs and better education. Some of my respondents or occasional passers-by called them openly "*mambety*," a negative Kazakh term for a rural, uneducated, and uncultured person. Blaming the newly arrived for negative changes is a typical reaction in the face of massive migration into an urban centre, especially when it occurs in a short period of time. Nonetheless, the derogatory term "*mambet*" is most commonly used towards Kazakhs.

Observation of public spaces in Almaty and the experiences people make of them show us that two social and cultural dimensions coexist in

27. These most recent neighbourhoods (*mikrorayony*) were built illegally. See below.

the city. Khanat's way of seeing the Independence Monument and new Republic Square is an example. He is a member of the recent wave migrants who have arrived from a smaller centre hoping to find better work and education. He is a success story because he is managing to find small jobs that grant him a stable, if not large, salary. Nonetheless, his universe inside the city is different from that of the historian, not only because he belongs to the next generation, but because they are members of two different social and cultural universes and speak different languages.<sup>28</sup> Both Khanat and the historian live on small wages; but the historian has inherited the house that was given to her family in the Soviet period, whereas Khanat's wage only allows him to rent a flat in the outskirts of the city by sharing the costs with all his brothers. While he is quiet about his feelings towards the city, other Kazakhs from similar backgrounds, translate their frustrations with the unequal distribution of wealth into ethnic terms: their arguments stress their sensation that the Kazakh people cannot afford to live in the best parts of the city and that they have been too tolerant in the past, so now the minorities control the centre. I have heard this many times when speaking with people from the periphery, many of whom are educated people working at the university. Many of them are recently urbanised Kazakhs, who come from the *auls* or smaller urban centres in Kazakhstan, which are mainly Kazakh-speaking, like Chimkent or Taraz. Their affection for the independence monument might be considered a transfer of positive values to what Almaty represents for them: once a capital closed to the majority of the rural population, it is the ideal place to find a job, a better salary, and a higher standard of living, even if, in reality, this is not always the case. As a matter of fact, as we shall see, these people are often the most marginalised social strata in the city and live in the peripheral areas.

#### *4. Urbanization and Kazakhisation: the arrival of the Kazakhs*

The cases of Khanat and the historian suggest that the city's linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds also imply two different ways of living in the city and having access to it and its resources. As a matter of fact, dif-

28. In Khanat's large family only he and a young niece speak Russian, and his Russian is not fluent: he does not always distinguish between genders, which are missing in Kazakh grammar.

ferent groups of the population experience isolation on different levels. Some may not feel involved in the Kazakhisation of civic and old Soviet values; others may not feel involved in the modernisation and benefits that the city ideally offers. In such a context, ethnicity – and especially Kazakh ethnicity – is often used to explain inequalities or changes that seem incomprehensible to the city residents. The following observation of the demographic changes inside the city and the dynamics of population distribution will help illuminate further the positions of majorities and minorities post-Soviet society.

As in the whole country, the data of the post-Soviet censuses (1999 and 2009) and the migration flows in Almaty show a constant decrease of the European presence, whereas the Kazakhs and the other non-European groups are constant or increasing. As Bhavna Dave puts it, the census is the political means by which majorities and minorities become officially visible and therefore significant from a political and social perspective, especially in ethnically divided societies.<sup>29</sup> According to this conclusion, the solid presence of an ethnic group should legitimise its right as majority also in the public sphere. Particularly for the political elites, the demographic question has been considered very significant, as Kazakhs were a minority in their own land at the end collapse of the Soviet Union. For this reason, demographic data has been scrupulously collected and published.

But here, I argue that the relatively low “degree of Kazakhness” is more worrying than the numbers, as the more integrated groups do not represent Kazakh culture and language as sponsored by the state. The city of Almaty, in particular, has been a culturally and linguistically Russian city since the Tsarist period in a region where the non-urban population was predominantly Kazakh. Since Almaty was the political centre during the Soviet era and one of the cultural and economic centres after independence, the demographic and socio-cultural changes in the city constitute a paramount issue for the political landscape. In order to be more Kazakh, the city would need to reflect a more Kazakh face in the

29. B. Dave, “Entitlement through numbers: nationality and language categories in the first post-soviet census of Kazakhstan,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 10: 4 (2004), pp. 439-43. See also Dominique Arel, “Démographie et politique dans les premiers recensements post-soviétiques: méfiance envers l’Etat, identités en question,” in *Population* (French Edition), 6 (2002), pp. 791-820.

public sphere and in social mobility. In this way, the city, the symbol of the progress toward socialism the Soviet period, has assumed a symbolic value for the social improvement of Kazakhs in the recent years. In Almaty, we are witnessing a shared idea derived from the official discourse on the right of the Kazakhs to take control of urban space and the promotion of Kazakh culture. A Uyghur taxi driver told me that he understands why the Kazakhs want to take control of their land; the Uyghurs would do the same. He also added that what the Kazakhs do is not the Uyghurs' affair. In the same way, an elderly Korean woman confirmed that the territory belonged to the Kazakhs, and she expressed a mix of positive and negative sentiment about being a member of a minority. She insisted on the fact that the Kazakhs welcomed the Koreans after they were deported to Kazakhstan. At the same time, she expressed concern about the future of her grandchildren who do not speak Kazakh or are not Kazakh.<sup>30</sup> After all, urban Kazakhs often tell me that they are ashamed of not knowing their language and, at the same time, complain about the negative social example set by the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs. Moreover, we see that the increase in the city's Kazakh population has not been accompanied by the consolidation of Kazakh culture as a foundation for the creation of a new civic conscience. For example, the growth of the Kazakh-speaking population should in theory create greater demand for Kazakh schools, thereby encouraging more radical social and cultural transformation. Official statistics show that during the school year 2009-2010, the total number of students of secondary schools studying in Kazakh throughout the country was 1,551,000, whereas the students studying in Russian were 868,500.<sup>31</sup> However, in Almaty in 2010, we see that the majority of secondary schools still teach in Russian. We find 51 schools in Kazakh, 161 in Russian, 1 in English, 1 in Turkish, and 3 in Uyghur.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, for the school year 2009-2010 the number of students is distributed as follows: 71,500 are enrolled in Kazakh language schools and 98,300 in Russian language schools.<sup>33</sup> As Brubaker observes:

30. Interview with Valentina Kim in September 2010.

31. N.a., "Regiony Kazakhstana v 2009 godu," *Statisticheskij sbornik* (Astana: Agencstvo po Statistike Respubliki Kazakhstana, 2010), p. 147.

32. N.a., "Dnevnye obshcheobrazovatel'nye shkoly goroda Almaty na nachalo 2008/2009 uchebnogo goda," *Statisticheskij byulleten'* (Almaty: Agencstvo Respubliki Kazakhstana po statistike, 2009), p. 28.

33. "Regiony Kazakhstana v 2009 godu", p. 147.

Schools serve as important instruments of social reproduction – and social transformation. [...] Integrated, centralized school systems like that of the French Third Republic contribute to producing and reproducing “the nation” as a single unified citizenry by propagating national culture, inculcating nationalist attitudes, and promoting linguistic standardization and assimilation. Religiously or ethnically segmented school systems, however, contribute to the production and reproduction of a segmented society.<sup>34</sup>

The prevailing number of Russian schools in the city is, therefore, quite significant and shows how problematic it is to encourage social and cultural transformation without the Russian language. It is also important to notice that education in Kazakh is not yet at the same level as education in Russian. Furthermore, Russian remains the language of business and, therefore, continues to grant social and economic mobility. However, even if data is not always completely reliable, given its use for political purposes, it is possible to confirm that there is an increase in the number of citizens who identify themselves as Kazakhs.<sup>35</sup> One of the main reasons for such an increase is due to consistent emigration of European groups (Slavs and Germans, in particular), and increasing immigration flows from smaller urban centres or rural villages. Although the numbers show that the city is actually becoming more and more Kazakh, as the political elite would wish, the way people integrate in the urban space shows that they are vulnerable to potential marginalisation and that the accessible Kazakh language education cannot provide them with the necessary means to improve their economic and social situation. The migration of Kazakhs consists mainly of inter-regional flows and less migration from outside the national borders.<sup>36</sup> This fact suggests that the migration in-

34. Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, pp. 269-70.

35. Alekseenko notes that the publication of the 1999 census shows some modified data compared with the previous Soviet census taken in 1989 concerning demographic changes. In the new version, the number of the population in 1989 is 1.6% less than in the Soviet version. Such a variation is due to new calculations after President Nazarbaev declared that the population had been over-counted by error in the last census. According to Alekseenko's calculations, the new version reduces the Russian and Belorussian populations by 2.6%, the Ukrainian population by 2.3%, and the Kazakh population by 0.6%. Alexander Alekseenko, “Respublika v zerkale perepisei naseleniya,” *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 28: 12 (2001), pp. 58-61.

36. Concerning Kazakhs from outside the republic, they constitute the so-called *oral-man* group. They are ex-Soviet citizens born in other ex-Soviet republics like Uzbekistan or are the descendants of those Kazakhs who fled the country in the 1930s during Stalin's terror and the forced collectivisation, and who lived mainly in China and Mongolia. A state

volves primarily the younger population coming from smaller urban centres and rural areas where unemployment has reached the highest rates since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Table 1. Demographic Trends in Almaty (national affiliation)

	1989*		1999**		2009***	
		%		%		%
Kazakhs	252072	22,5	434397	38,5	724202	53,0
Russians	663251	59,1	510366	45,2	452947	33,2
Uyghurs	40880	3,6	60427	5,4	71245	5,2
Koreans	16073	1,4	19090	1,7	24610	1,8
Uzbeks	4996	0,5	4304	0,4	6849	0,5
Ukrainians	45598	4,1	22835	2,0	11903	0,9
Tatars	27288	2,4	24770	2,2	20865	1,5
Germans	20117	1,8	9390	0,8	5743	0,4
Others	51120	4,6	43777	3,8	47268	3,5
<b>TOT</b>	<b>1121395</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1129356</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1365632</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Soviet census of 1989 (Itogi vsesoyuznoy perepisi naseleniya 1989, GosKomstat Kaz. Resp. TOM 2).

\*\* Census of 1999 (Itogi Natsional'noy perepisi naseleniya Respubliki Kazakhstan 1999 g. TOM 1).

\*\*\*Census of 2009 (Itogi Natsional'noy perepisi naseleniya Respubliki Kazakhstan 2009 g. TOM 2).

program guarantees these persons automatic citizenship once they enter Kazakhstan and financial aid that does not always reach the beneficiaries. The question of the *oralmany* is a complex and delicate one all over the country. Even if limited in number, their arrival has indeed caused conflict and violence against them, as they are perceived as strangers with whom Kazakhstani Kazakhs have only language in common. The *oralmany* are considered a potential source of competition in the workplace by the most vulnerable. The segregation/inclusion dynamics of native and foreign Kazakhs are quite different. For more details on the *oralmany*, see Alexander Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora: Settlement Planning and the Oralman Dilemma," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57: 2 (2005), pp. 327-48 and T. Darieva, "Recruiting for the Nation: Post-Soviet Transnational Migrants in Germany and Kazakhstan," in E. Kasten, ed., *Rebuilding Identities. Pathways to Reform Post-Soviet Siberia* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2005), pp. 153-72.

Table 2. Migration flows (net migration) to and from Almaty

	1995*				2009**			
	Inter-oblasts	Near abroad (ex URSS)	Far abroad	TOT	Inter-oblasts	Near abroad (ex URSS)	Far abroad	TOT
Kazakhs	12163	461	96	<b>12720</b>	11986	357	273	<b>12616</b>
Russians	859	-10537	- 1214	<b>-10892</b>	628	-1073	-157	<b>-602</b>
Ukrainians	41	- 710	- 101	<b>-770</b>	51	-61	-10	<b>-20</b>
Belarusians	28	- 137	- 16	<b>-125</b>	7	-6	-1	<b>0</b>
Tatars	128	- 223	- 13	<b>-108</b>	140	27	-5	<b>162</b>
Uzbeks	19	- 17	0	<b>2</b>	148	50	-1	<b>197</b>
Azeris	75	0	- 10	<b>65</b>	169	27	18	<b>214</b>
Greeks	19	- 24	- 117	<b>-122</b>	12	-2	1	<b>11</b>
Chechens	33	48	- 1	<b>80</b>	23	-15	-1	<b>7</b>
Koreans	258	5	6	<b>269</b>	257	192	-4	<b>445</b>
Uyghurs	467	35	- 2	<b>500</b>	506	4	52	<b>562</b>
Germans	19	- 110	-1904	<b>-1995</b>	53	-26	-3	<b>24</b>
Others	175	- 196	- 362	<b>-383</b>	377	230	225	<b>832</b>
TOT	14284	-11405	-3638	<b>-759</b>	14357	-296	387	<b>14448</b>

\* Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Migratsionnoe dvizhenie g. Almaty, 1996).

\*\* Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Statisticheskij Ezhegodnik g. Almaty, 2009).

The migration flows toward the city can be summarised as follows:

- Inter-regional migration flows (inter-oblast') is characteristic for Kazakhs, Uyghurs and Koreans;
- Migration flows from/to the other ex-Soviet Republics (near abroad) is characteristic for Slavs in general;
- Migration flows from/to countries outside the ex-Soviet territory (far abroad): the Germans are the largest group to migrate abroad.

In Table 2, we see that the migration flows in 1995 and in 2009 have not changed significantly: a constant arrival of Turkic peoples to Almaty and a constant, if diminished, out-flow of Slavs who returned to their country of origin or historical homeland. In general, the arrival of a Kazakh majority into the city has caused social distress. Many local scholars have emphasised the rural social and cultural background of these people, arguing that the city is undergoing a process of “ruralisation.”<sup>37</sup> Another way to define the current demographic process is “Kazakhisation,” with reference to the fact that the majority of the newcomers are Kazakh-speakers. Both definitions often bear negative connotations and do not differ much from the descriptions of the old city dwellers.

The main reasons for migration are economic, namely the failure of the small industrial centres, *kolkhozes*, and *sovkhoses*, which were connected with the Soviet economic model and could not adapt to major political change. The concentration of economic and financial activities in the large urban areas inevitably attracted an impoverished population; Almaty has become one of the most attractive centres.

Although the rural migrants are singled out as an element of disturbance in the post-Soviet city, the origin of social problems is, in reality, largely due to poor institutional organisation and a system of migration laws that favours migration from abroad (*oralmany* and foreigners) over inter-regional flows and country to city movements. For example, consider the case of the Provincial Department of Internal Affairs, which has been moved to another city, Taldykorgan, now the capital of the Province of Almaty and the location of the provincial administration, and now responsible for monitoring migration issues.<sup>38</sup> In the city the question of the internal migration is considered a potentially explosive issue, which neither the city authorities, nor the Department want to have on their hands. In this way, no concrete measures are ever taken. In addition, internal migrants are often registered in their old residence in the *auls*, becoming or remaining invisible individuals, according to the authorities. Furthermore, they have no access to welfare services such as health assistance, social aid, or education, as they are not officially registered in the city. This further limits the integration of migrants from outside the city.

37. For instance, this occurred in a conversation with a local historian, Zhuldzbek Abylkhozhin, in 2009.

38. This was confirmed during an interview with sociologist Irina Chernykh from the Institute of Strategic Studies of Almaty, March 2011.



As mentioned earlier, the city has undergone a process of unregulated building and gentrification, and the outskirts have become a combination of unauthorized, squatter dwellings and new *mikrorayons* (micro-districts) planned by big private companies.<sup>39</sup> Corruption in the public administration and the private housing sector has allowed many people without means or documents to build their own houses on free land, thereby contributing to the development of these unauthorised settlements.<sup>40</sup> The newcomers have limited means for rents and little chance to find a stable job. According to some local sociologists, rural Kazakhs in Almaty settle in particular areas, namely the industrial district, and the *Turksib rayon* in the northern area, where the main street (the former *Tashkent-skaya*) leads to one of the biggest wholesale bazaars, the *Barakholka*, also one of the principal work destinations for newcomers. Beyond these districts, swampland and steppe devoid of services have recently become the locations of the unauthorised building mentioned above. Migration toward that part of the town has been so consistent that in 2008 a new city district was formed, the *Alatau rayon* (Alatau district). The first census of the Alatau rayon was conducted in 2009 and shows that the population is 68,6% Kazakh, followed by 13,6% Russian, 9% Uyghur, 2,3% Dungan, and 6,5% other nationalities.<sup>41</sup>

An interview conducted in March 2011 with a local sociologist – whom we shall call Svetlana – who has studied the social integration process of rural Kazakhs in Almaty, has confirmed that newcomers are typically less educated and have a weaker command of Russian.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, they have less chance to find better jobs in the private sector where mostly Russian is spoken. However, some of the newcomers have more education and

39. The *mikro-rayon*, which we can translate in English as micro-district, is a small neighbourhood that when grouped with other neighbourhoods in larger city areas is known in Russian as a *rayon*.

40. For more details, see B. Sanghera, E. Saltybaldieva, et al., “Illegal Settlements and City Registration in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan: Implications for Legal Empowerment, Politics and Ethnic Tensions,” *Central Eurasia Project, Occasional Paper Series*, 5 (2012), pp. 20-1.

41. N.a., *Itogi natsional'noy i naseleniya Respubliki Kazakhstana 2009 goda*, g. Almaty, vol. 2 (Astana: Agenstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike, 2011), p. 6.

42. Svetlana has conducted sociological research on Kazakh youth between the ages of 18 and 25, who have recently moved to Almaty. The results of this research have never been published. I am, therefore, grateful to Svetlana for sharing her findings with me.

work in the public sector (library, archives, municipality, and universities) where the low income does not allow them to buy a flat in the city. The less educated find employment in semi-legal jobs (taxi driving, in particular), small trade in bazaars or illegal activities. A similar trend can be seen in university staffing. One of my informants, a Russian professor working at KazGU,<sup>43</sup> tells me that many new Kazakh-speaking professors arrived in the early 1990s when a significant number of Soviet-era professors left their positions to trade in the bazaars (as they could increase their income) or retired.<sup>44</sup> The new professors come mainly from smaller towns where they have graduated and/or completed a PhD in Kazakh. The personal stories of some of the professors I spoke with confirm this trend.

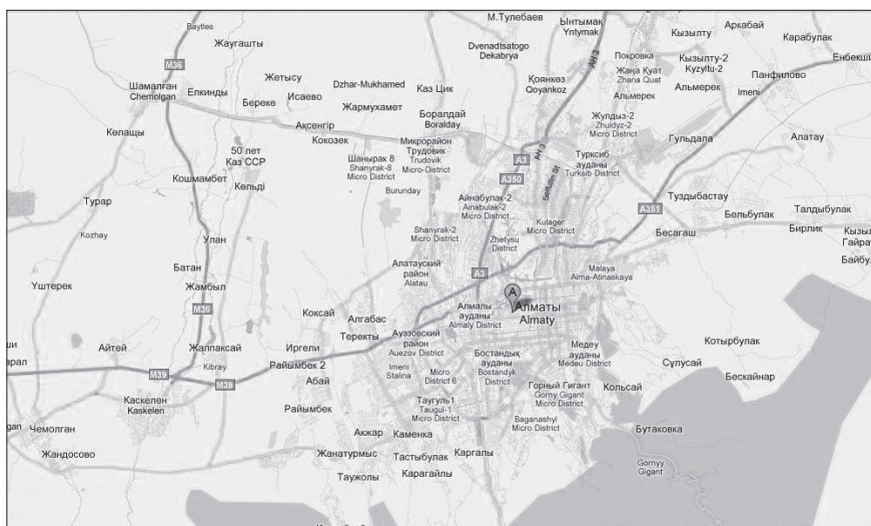
It is important to acknowledge that although Russian has lost its official status in society, it remains the language spoken by the most integrated parts of the population, who do not see a world of shared values in Kazakh traditions or culture. Russian is also spoken in the city centre and business districts, where competition and a globalised economic environment have contributed to a truly multi-ethnic environment. The most marginalised section of the population, on the other hand, identifies with an idealised Kazakh culture, in which language becomes the main vector of identification and contributes to the creation of a world of shared values. According to the sociological research mentioned above, about 60% of 1,500 young Kazakh-speaking students from technical institutes and universities in Almaty, between the ages of 18 and 25, wish Kazakh were the only language in the city. This idea is typical of many citizens whose first language is Kazakh and whose opinion is that every citizen should know Kazakh and that Kazakh culture should correspond to the desire to create new, shared values which would promote greater integration. According to my informant, most of these people do not earn more than 25,000 tenges (about 170\$) per month. They went to school in the *auls* where the quality of education is lower than in the city and, therefore, university choices are more limited. Most will not be able to win local or

43. Interview conducted in March 2011 with Elena C., a Russian sociology professor at KazGU since the late 1980s. Elena C. was born in Almaty in 1962 into a Russian family whose ancestors settled in the city during the colonial period. She described how her university has changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union and how she now feels insecure about her son's future of in Almaty and in Kazakhstan since he is Russian.

44. In 1994, 79.5% of the students in KazGU University were Kazakhs. Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict," p. 494.

international scholarships; nor do they have connections with people who might help them improve their status. This suggests that this section of the population experiences urban spaces differently from the rest of the urban community. Potential social contrasts between this group and more urbanised groups, consisting of Russian-speakers, Kazakhs included, can assume, therefore, a symbolic value that reaches beyond the social. In this way, we cannot really speak of pure ethnic tensions, but rather tensions between two linguistically and culturally different groups, which sometimes define themselves in ethnic terms. The distinction between Kazakhs and others and very often between two different groups of Kazakhs characterises ethnic confrontation. Significantly, Kazakh-speakers make a distinction between *naghyz kazak* (real Kazakh) and *shala kazak* (not completely Kazakh), i.e. Russified Kazakhs. Recent events on the periphery of the city can help us understand the effects of this kind of socio-cultural polarisation and the limits of the rhetoric of Kazakhisation in transforming and creating a new community of citizens.

### 5. Shanyrak and the land question



Map 2. Almaty, centre and periphery. The Alatau district is in the north-eastern part of the city.

Urban conflicts in Kazakhstan have been described by other researchers in northern cities where unskilled Kazakhs migrate to find work and are faced with poverty and non-existent social mobility. According to some authors, such conflicts result often in nationalist-inspired aggression.<sup>45</sup> The recent clashes that occurred in the periphery of Almaty introduce us to this kind of urban issue when a Kazakh majority group claims its rights before authorities with a Kazakh majority. This suggests we consider that nationalism is a simplistic way of interpreting such issues, at least in Kazakhstan.

The new Alatau district, named after the mountain near Almaty, was legally incorporated in 2008. It is composed by different *mikrorayons* (micro-districts), some of which were built by large private companies and others developed as unauthorised shanty dwellings. The *mikrorayons Shanyrak* are an example of the latter.<sup>46</sup> In the early 1990s, the municipality of Almaty reserved a part of the undeveloped land for the construction of housing as a way of addressing the mass migration described above. Already in the 1990s the city administration started assigning plots of land to recent immigrants without housing, so that they could build private houses. In this way, many micro-districts like Shanyrak, Duman, and others, emerged. It seems that corruption and illegal transactions among *akimat* officials played an increasingly important role in the acquisition of the land plots as capitalism developed and the price of land in Almaty began to rise.<sup>47</sup>

It is difficult to evaluate the demographic situation of this neighbourhood; the first official data, published in the 2009 census, indicates that the total population of the Alatau district is 151,747,<sup>48</sup> even if many specialists declare that the population is much higher and growing at a fast pace.<sup>49</sup>

45. Tom Everett-Heath, *Central Asia. Aspects of Transition* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 184.

46. *Shanyrak* is the central part of the ceiling of a yurt, where the wooden poles sustaining the structure cross, creating a hole for light and ventilation. In Kazakh *shanyrak* means 'fireplace,' 'home,' and 'family.'

47. S. A. Kozhakhmetov, M. Asanbaev, *Vnutrennyaya migratsiya v Kazakhstane: v poiskakh resheniya* (Almaty: Shanyrak, 2010), pp. 41-3. Kozhakhmetov is a political opponent and businessman, founder of the Academy of Business in Almaty. He has also founded the organisation "Shanyrak," with which aims to defend the rights of the inhabitants of these micro-districts. In addition, he conducts research on issues relevant to the community.

48. N.a., *Itogi natsional'noy perepisi naseleniya Respubliki Kazakhstan 2009 goda, g. Almaty*, vol. 1 (Astana: Agenstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike, 2011), p. 4.

49. See also Sanghera et al., "Illegal Settlements," pp. 21, 27-8.

Indeed, the number cannot be precise, as part of the population is not registered in that area. As we have seen, mainly rural Kazakhs and *oralmany* now inhabit this part of the Alatau district. The district relates two different narratives: the story of the economic and social polarisation in the post-Soviet society and the story of the difficult urbanisation of the Kazakh-speaking population. Residents of the centre, who claim these people have no right to settle in the area and are the cause of many of the social problems there, view the district with suspicion.

I went to the *mikrorayon Shanyrak-2* for the first time in July 2009. My Kazakh teacher invited me to witness celebrations for the first year of the district where one of her friends and colleagues live. She told me that the district sprang up spontaneously and, following street protests, the Parliament had finally authorised the residence of the approximately 30,000 people living there, thus creating the Alatau district. The site of the celebration was a little apart from the dwellings, close to a group of *kurgans* (ancient archaeological tomb sites), which my teacher said have great historical meaning for the Kazakhs. My teacher's friend arrived there in 2000s. She had come to Almaty in the 1980s from the smaller town of Taraz to continue work on her PhD and had moved to Shanyrak because she had no flat in the city and was renting a room in a student residence. Like many other people in the district, she had bought a piece of land and built a house for herself, her son, and later one for her mother and a brother. Her house had no water and no gas; the municipality had promised to supply the neighbourhood, but by the early 2011 they were still without these services.

A series of concerts of traditional and pop Kazakh music were organised for the celebration. The *akims* (mayors) of all of the city districts and the *akim* of the city at large, Akmedzhan Esimov, had been invited. Every district of the city was represented by a *yurt*, a nomad tent and Kazakh handicrafts were displayed from the *yurts*. This was another reason my teacher had invited me to the event: to show me examples of Kazakh culture. Indeed, some typical Kazakh games were played and some people were wearing traditional Kazakh dresses. The feast, organised by the municipality, was indeed very Kazakh, as were most participants. The fact that my teacher considered it the occasion for me to see typical Kazakh food and customs, handicrafts, dances and games, was for me very significant. The feast appeared to be for the Kazakh community, in particular, for a new district that seemed to be exclusively Kazakh.



Image 10. Shanyrak during the celebrations of July 2009.



Image 11. Shanyrak celebrations in 2009: the Akim of Turksib in the centre wearing the traditional chapān.



But the celebrations I witnessed masked recent dramatic events that had had led to the legalisation of the Alatau district. According to the print and online media, the land where many *Shanyrak* and other micro-districts developed was deemed unsuitable for building even though it appears that some of the plots were sold to naive migrants at very low prices with the connivance of private businessmen and representatives of the municipality. The newcomers built their houses without foundations and without sewer connections. Later two private companies were liquidated and three of their members were arrested in 2008 for having illegally sold the land.<sup>50</sup>

In the July 2006 clashes, a policeman was killed and several civilians were injured. When the city police arrived to coordinate clearing the illegal areas, residents of the neighbourhood put up resistance, attacking the police with stones and homemade bottle bombs. Fuelled by rage, they set fire to the policeman, causing his death. Apparently, six hundred police units assembled to contain the disorder. The two-day clashes captured attention in Almaty and other parts of Kazakhstan, and opened the debate on the situation of rural people and *oralmany* in the cities. According to online newspapers, some exponents of opposition political movements, known for their nationalistic views, arrived in Shanyrak on the second day of protests and are suspected of having organised the clashes against the city authorities.<sup>51</sup> The most famous is the poet Aron Atabek, who is known for having taken part in the 1986 riots and in the *Zheltoksan* (December) movement in the 1980s and who lived close to the *Shanyrak* districts (he has now been sentenced to 18 years in prison).

After the clashes, the city authorities were forced to re-evaluate their intention to clear the area and, after a few years, the decision was made to legally recognize the residents and their houses and to clear out only a small part of the houses. Today the *Shanyrak* events are considered almost a taboo subject and the population generally avoids talking about the events. This further isolates the population of the peripheral districts, who are victims of considerable prejudice at the hands of the older and more well off inhabitants of the city. I once asked a Kazakh professor who lives in the centre if he could provide me with some contacts in the *Shanyrak* district.

50. <http://www.zakon.kz/120978-v-almaty-likvidirovany-opg.html>, last accessed February 2011.

51. <http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=4501>, last accessed September 2010.



Image 12. Unauthorised housing in Shanyrak.

He said that one of his students came from that area, but that he had not kept in contact with him, nor did he intend to stay in contact with people from there because of what was happening there.<sup>52</sup> This is not an isolated case: many of my acquaintances expressed concern when I told them that I was going to *Shanyrak-2*.

The local press calls the people from this area *samozakhvatchiki* (invaders) or *shanyrakhtsy*. Many of these residents have been able to produce documentation attesting to their ownership, but this was considered invalid. Others have allegedly occupied the land without buying it. The question of the *Shanyrakhtsy* and the internal migrants has been exploited by opposition parties who manipulate the frequent incidents for their nationalistic causes, claiming that the Kazakhs have fewer rights than other ethnic groups and comparing the outbreak of violence to the 1986 riots by calling the episode the “revolt of Shanyrak” (*vostanie Shanyraka*) or “a tragedy of the Kazakh people.”<sup>53</sup> *Shanyrak* has become a symbol of the land question

52. Conversation in February 2011.

53. Radio Azattyq, [http://rus.azattyq.org/content/sobytia\\_v\\_Shanyrake/1775980.html](http://rus.azattyq.org/content/sobytia_v_Shanyrake/1775980.html), last accessed February 2011.



and the Kazakhs who have no place in the city. One opposition politician even compared these clashes and related events with the land question during the tsarist period when Slavic settlers occupied the land of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz nomads.<sup>54</sup> In this way, he sought to underscore the fact that the Kazakhs have no power in their own territory.

*Shanyrak* is now slowly developing. A new *akimat* was built in 2009; some streets have been paved; schools and kindergartens have been opened. Nonetheless, *Shanyrak* remains a poor, under-privileged, and under-serviced area, subject to flooding. Most people are unable to move from the area, because they either do not have the means or are not registered residents of the city. As a result, the residents of *Shanyrak* remain socially isolated on two levels: stigmatised by the urban community and excluded from access to city welfare services available to legally registered residents.<sup>55</sup> And many wish one day to live closer to the centre of the city where they work. Unlike other stigmatised urban areas where the population is made up mainly of foreign migrants who mingle with the poorest social strata of the city,<sup>56</sup> the *Shanyrak* population is composed mainly of those who belong to the titular nation and thus to the ethnic majority, and who have become instruments of the political agenda. The question of housing and access to the benefits the city might grant to the rural population is rather a social issue relevant to a large part of the population. As we have seen in the case of the 2009 celebrations, political opponents, intellectuals, and institutions have reinterpreted this issue in ethnic (Kazakh) terms, again transforming “Kazakhness” into a discussion of citizens’ rights.

## 6. Conclusion: social contrasts and the importance of being Kazakh

In the city of Almaty, the question of how to promote a nation-state and a new identity reveals deep social contrasts connected with the fact that the Kazakh “titular nation” remained relatively un-urbanised in the

54. See interview with Zhasaral Kuanyshalin, one of the public defenders of the people from Shanyrak who has been convicted, on Radio Liberty: [http://rus.azattyq.org/content/sobytiya\\_v\\_Shanyrake/1775980.html](http://rus.azattyq.org/content/sobytiya_v_Shanyrake/1775980.html), last accessed February 2011.

55. [http://www.moldir-propiska.com/data.php?n\\_id=15&l=ru](http://www.moldir-propiska.com/data.php?n_id=15&l=ru), last accessed February 2011.

56. L. Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts. A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010 [2008]), p. 239.

Soviet period. This factor, rather than the Kazakhs' demographic inferiority, has shifted emphasis to their right to settle in the city. Therefore, the centrality of the city is essential to understanding the nature of post-Soviet social contrasts in Kazakhstan. The promotion of the Kazakhs as stakeholders in the nation requires their introduction into a developing urban context, which would guarantee social mobility. The majority of the internal migrants are Kazakh-speakers from rural areas; however, the integration policies put in place by the government are woefully ineffective. The urbanisation process is the result of unequal economic dynamics that push the population away from smaller rural and urban centres in search for better living conditions. Difficulty in securing legal work and affordable housing, linguistic and cultural contrasts with older city dwellers, as well as widespread corruption amongst the city authorities hinder social integration. Rural Kazakhs better represent *Kazakhness* as they speak Kazakh and have preserved their cultural traditions better than city dwellers, yet they are the most socially vulnerable group. As a result, the image of a new nation in which Kazakh culture would develop modern civic values is at odds with the challenges facing Kazakh-speakers attempting to integrate in the urban economy and community whose majority still speaks Russian.

Privatisation and structural changes within the city administration have created new social barriers, especially for internal migrants. These translate into tense relationships between the centre and the periphery, newcomers and old city dwellers, vulnerable social groups and city authorities. Kazakh-speakers, only recently urbanised, appear to be more sensitive to the new nationalising discourse than the more integrated Russian-speaking population (which also includes ethnic Kazakhs who are more fluent in Russian). At times the latter recognise the centrality of the Kazakhs as promoted in the official discourse, but do not feel affection for the new symbols that should communicate shared values. Thus, there is no unifying definition of citizenship. At the same time, socially vulnerable citizens and political opponents often put forward claims for social justice connected with the land question as "rights of the Kazakhs." And although Almaty has acquired a more Kazakh look and a larger Kazakh population, a significant section of the population constituting of the new Kazakh majority is, in fact, vulnerable to potential marginalisation due to economic and cultural factors. These citizens are less well off and their Kazakh education does not provide them the means to access social mobility.

This is most evident in the case of *Shanyrak*, the case study in contrast between Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs that Nazpary observed in the 1990s, then among the most marginalised and socially deviant individuals, has now acquired the character of a distinct community.<sup>57</sup> In the case of *Shanyrak*, a whole neighbourhood of ordinary residents reacted violently to the discrimination and abandonment by the authorities. People often interpret these social contrasts in ethnic terms, especially when they emphasise the exaggerated tolerance of the Kazakhs who cannot live in a city centre apparently inhabited by the other minorities. Some intellectuals and politicians, who exploit the case of *Shanyrak* in support of their nationalist ideas, give credence to the same discourse. The character of the celebrations that should have put right the question of this neighbourhood confirmed this tendency further. By conducting the celebrations in this key, the authorities repeat the same symbols and rhetoric that have been applied to the re-invention of the city centre via Kazakh symbols (the yurts representing the *akimats*), ancient historical myths (the kurgans) and decorations, as well as a newly invented folklore. The case of Almaty shows that the Kazakh-speaking population promoted as national majority has difficulty integrating into the lively cultural and economic life of the city, where two cultural and linguistic worlds (the Russian and the Kazakh) live quite isolated from one another and where social inequalities and isolation are re-interpreted in ethnic terms by the less integrated Kazakh population.

57. Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos*, p. 174.

MARCO BUTTINO

## Minorities in the Urban Territory of Samarkand from the Soviet Years to the Present\*

Annexation into the Russian Empire transformed the cities of Central Asia. The European presence increased steadily from year to year and in many cities new neighbourhoods were created alongside the old quarters in which the indigenous population lived. With increased immigration during the Soviet era, the majority of the population in the principal cities were either Slavs or Russianized minorities, and the common language used by all, including the native inhabitants, was Russian. The Soviets saw these changes as part of a process of modernisation that would spread progressively from the Russian neighbourhoods to the local population. I wish to examine how this process developed in Samarkand over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how it was subsequently abandoned.

I will focus attention on three minority groups that played an important role in Samarkand: Bukhara Jews, Lyuli (a Gypsy people) and Koreans. Up until the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these groups maintained different traditions and languages until they were involved in the processes of social and cultural integration in the Soviet era. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, they would seek new spaces and new distinct identities, pursuing whatever different viable courses of action were open to them. We are going to examine the essential aspects of these processes of integration, following the tracks they have left on the urban territory.

### 1. *How many of them are there?*

In the Samarkand of a century ago the Bukhara Jews made up a distinct part of the population. They recognised their common religion as the

\* Translated by Jocelyn Holmes and Susan Finnel.

basis of their community, used Hebrew as the exclusive language of their religious culture, managed their own schools and cultural activities, were employed in specific trades and vocations, organised as a community, and were recognised as such by the city authorities. Similarly, the Lyuli constituted a group with evident distinguishing features. They too had their own language, vaunted common Indian origins, were recognised as a specific group among the native populations, and their way of life and types of work were predominantly nomadic. At that time the Koreans were not yet established in the region; they were deported from the Far East in the Soviet era. On their arrival they were different in every way and could be distinguished by their facial features; they were a community apart, under the control of the authorities. There can be no doubt, therefore, that these three groups, especially at that time, are to be considered minorities with distinctive features compared to the rest of the population, which was prevalently Tajik in language and culture and Muslim in faith.

Defining these groups as minorities leads us to wonder just how significant their numbers were in the urban population. This question, however, inevitably puts us into some difficulty. We can of course resort to the census data, which reflects the individual declarations of group identity. The data relative to the city of Samarkand are only available, however, up to the 1959 census, after which there are only compound figures taking in the whole urban population of the region, including a number of other towns besides Samarkand; they are not therefore comparable with earlier figures (see Table 1).

The censuses describe our groups as exiguous minorities of only a few thousand people. The data consists of the national identities declared by the citizens and adapted by the census committees on the basis of a list of officially recognised nationalities. During the entire Soviet period the administrative bureaucracy and the censuses continued, in fact, to require all the citizens to declare their nationality, thus forcing those who would have preferred to avoid a national label, or felt that their national identity was by that time meaningless, to make a choice. The statistics treated national identity as an apparently objective datum, attributed to every citizen, like age or gender.

Furthermore, a bureaucratic identity was recorded on passports, which was not made public, nor did it appear in statistics. This was a form of national label which each person carried with them as an indelible attribute and which was given considerable importance, since the State, at least after the second world war, adopted positive action policies based on quotas, referring to those bureaucratic identities.

Table 1. Samarkand: inhabitants by national group

	1897 <sup>1</sup>	1926 <sup>2</sup>	1939 <sup>3</sup>	1959 <sup>4</sup>
Total	55,128	105,106	136,283	196,484
Russians*	8,393	30,031	50,304	70,110
Uzbeks	5,506	43,304	37,275	63,585
Tajiks	36,845	10,716	16,439	9,093
Bukhara Jews		7,740	7,593**	6,459
Koreans			1,959	2,912
Lyuli				1,136

\*Russians and Ukrainians

\*\*Counted as “Jews” without further specification.

National quotas regulated access to education, work, and every official post of responsibility. The relevance of the national identity labels led members of minority groups to claim to belong to one of the strong nationalities in the declarations made for the census and, whenever possible, in the bureaucratic registry. In Samarkand this meant calling oneself Tajik in the first Soviet years, or Uzbek. It would appear, for example, that in 1966 a quarter of the gypsies in the city were registered on their passports as Tajik or Uzbek.<sup>5</sup> It would have been against their interests to belong to a minority group. Thus, there was no real correspondence between the nationality people felt they belonged to – in this case, probably the Lyuli – and what they claimed for bureaucratic reasons.

Returning to the available census data, between the wars about 7,500 people declared themselves to be Bukhara Jews. In 1959, despite having

1. *Pervaja Vseobščaja Perepis' Naselenija Rossijskoj Imperii, 1897 g.*, LXXXIII: *Samarkandskaja oblast'* (St. Petersburg, 1905), pp. 1-3.

2. Samarqand Davlat Muzej, d.1177 (*Vsesojuznaja perepis' naselenija 1926 g.*), p. 56.

3. Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Samarkanskoj Oblasti (later GASO), 1515/1/3810/267.

4. GASO, 1515/1/3939/4-5.

5. H. H. Nazarov, *Vliyanie oktyabrskoj revolyucii na položenie i byt sredneaziatskikh cygan, na primere cygan, zhivyshikh v gorode Samarkande i Samarkandskoj oblasti*, dissertaciya na soiskanie uchenoj stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk (Dissertation. Samarkand, 1969), p. 33.

been spared the violence of the Shoah or having not had to emigrate, the Bukhara Jews appear to have decreased in number by around one thousand. The 1970s saw the beginning of an emigration flow towards Israel and the United States involving various families, but stopped after only a few years on the decision of the Soviet government. In the 1989 census, 4,611 people declared themselves to be Bukhara Jews.<sup>6</sup> During subsequent years, emigration commenced again with a vengeance. There were no further censuses, but it appears that the more the Jews emigrated the more the group increased since many acknowledged their original identity group in view of the possibility of emigration. In Samarkand today no more than a dozen people call themselves Bukhara Jews.

The Koreans, too, increased in number in the twenty years after the Second World War as many moved from the countryside to the town. In 1959 there were around 3,000 while in the whole region they numbered 7,500. This figure changed little in the next few years until the end of the 1980s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, emigration began and in the course of twenty years their numbers have been reduced by about half.<sup>7</sup>

For the Lyuli we have only the 1959 census data when only about a thousand people declared themselves to be members of this group. There was no emigration after the Soviet Union collapsed, apart from a higher propensity to migrate temporarily within Russia. In 2005, according to the president of the *mahalla* (neighbourhood) committee of the Lyuli, 2,800 Lyuli lived in the *mahalla* while in the entire city there were about 5,000.<sup>8</sup> Another member of the *mahalla* committee gave me a comparable figure five years later.<sup>9</sup>

Despite their approximate nature, these figures indicate processes of transformation that are evidently not merely numerical. Therefore, further clarification requires consideration of the physical location of the three groups in the urban territory.

6. Census figures taken from M. Tolts, "The Demographic Profile of the Bukhara Jews in the Late Soviet Period," in I. Baldauf, M. Gammer, T. Loy, eds., *Bukhara Jews in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: History, Experience and Narration* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2008,) p. 79.

7. M. Buttino, "Minorities in Samarkand: A Case Study of the City's Koreans," *Nationalities Papers*, 37: 5 (2009), p. 738.

8. Interview with Mustafo in his home on December 31, 2004. I have not used the real names of the people interviewed.

9. Interview with Olga, in the *mahalla* Committee HQ, on September 9, 2010.



## 2. Spaces in the urban territory

At different times and in different ways, each group has constructed a defined space for itself in the city.



Map 1. Google view.

Before the Russian conquest, the Bukhara Jews lived in a quarter in the old city, called either *mahallya-i-shark* or *mahallya Yahudiën* (Jewish quarter), which continued to exist throughout the Soviet era. The Russians called the district *mahalla Vostok* ‘Eastern Quarter.’ Even during the Imperial era, a minority of Bukhara Jews were also present in the new Russian part of the city, where they did not, however, have a space of their own.

Many of the houses the Jews built in Samarkand between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are still visible. In *mahalla Vostok* there are buildings that attest to their owners’ prosperity, Oriental culture, and strong religious ties (many had private synagogues), as well as the influence of the new Russian arrivals. There are also small family houses whose style is entirely Russian. In the new cities, too, there were houses belonging to Bukhara Jews. Some of these had been bought from



Russians in order to then rent them to other Russians (army officers, civil servants, businessmen), others were inhabited by Bukhara Jews who had chosen a Russian/European lifestyle. Built of brick, unlike the Tajik and Uzbek houses in the old city, the buildings conferred a further benefit on their owners: merchant families were able to use them as collateral for loans from Russian banks to finance their commercial activities.

After the 1930s the only remaining synagogue in the old city was the Gumbaz Synagogue, opened in the 1880s in the centre of the *mahalla Vos-tok*. The synagogue was allowed to fall into disrepair in the Soviet years until the end of the Second World War. After the war, the Bukhara Jewish religious community obtained formal recognition from the state and was “officially registered.” In the new part of the city there was a second synagogue built in 1978. Most members of this congregation were either Ashkenazi Jews who had arrived in Samarkand during the war, or Bukhara Jews living in the new city.



Image 1. The Rubinov family house.



Image 2. The Folch family house.

The richest houses built in the Tsarist colonial period were requisitioned after the October Revolution, while the others became state property though they continued to be inhabited by Jewish families. The district went into decline in the first Soviet decades; large houses hosted several families, the private synagogues were closed, some buildings were turned into warehouses or administrative offices, the Jewish artisan quarters disappeared. The will to destroy Jewish traditions was manifested in the forced transformation of the use of urban space. After the Second World War, when the Jewish community succeeded in gaining recognition as a rightful part of the Soviet population and concentrated on building areas of collaboration with the authorities, the *mahalla Vostok* gradually came back to life. As a consequence, during the last twenty years of the Soviet Union, the *mahalla Vostok* became a lively neighbourhood.

Moving a few steps beyond this area, we find ourselves in the Lyuli neighbourhood. This *mahalla*, too, has a history that pre-dates the Soviet era. Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Lyuli were considered semi-nomadic. The places where they settled, at least for the winter, were

on the outskirts of the city or in some *kishlak* (village with an indigenous population). In the early 1900s there was a *kishlak* of this kind near Samarkand. The first Lyuli settlement within the city was on land adjacent to the *mahalla* of the Bukhara Jews, which was already established. During the course of the war and the armed conflicts that accompanied the first years of Soviet rule, most of the Lyuli disappeared from the city. Many took refuge in Bukhara territory until 1920, when Red Army conquered the emirate. Consequently, they returned gradually to their territories and to Samarkand. In 1921, a group of about two hundred Lyuli shared space with a similar number of Tajik in the area where their *mahalla* is now. Other Lyuli families resided in a neighbouring area; but in the second half of the 1920s the city administration decided to expropriate this territory to make way for the construction of the Hudjum factory (described below). Many of the Lyuli homes were demolished, while the owners sold others to Bukhara Jews who extended the *mahalla Vostok*. The Lyuli were concentrated, therefore, in the adjacent zone where their *mahalla* is today.<sup>10</sup> The Lyuli increased in number throughout the 1930s when they were forced to settle permanently in one place.

During the Second World War the Lyuli were not drafted into the army and kept out of the way of the major events. In the general climate of poverty some of them returned to a nomadic lifestyle. However, in 1956 a return to order and the sedentary life was decreed. Between 1953 and 1958 in order to provide space for settlement, part of the communist *kolkhoz* where Lyuli peasants were almost certainly working was incorporated into the city administrative area. On this land, located next to the district in Samarkand where the Lyuli were already living, a housing complex of about one hundred units was built with one or two Lyuli families housed in each unit. Reorganisation of the territorial administration led to subdivision of the space inhabited by the Lyuli and the Tajik and the birth of two distinct *mahalla*. The Lyuli thus obtained their own *mahalla* and by the middle of the 1960s had 221 houses.<sup>11</sup> We can estimate that 300 families lived here, about 2,000 people altogether. The decisions by city authorities, as well as local social dynamics involving the Lyuli and their relations with the Tajik population, had brought about a concentration of the Lyuli population. Today, the old city *mahalla* is made up of houses occupied by one or two ex-

10. Nazarov, *Vliyanie oktyabrskoj revolyucii na polozhenie*, pp. 41-4.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

tended families. These houses are immediately recognisable as belonging to the Lyuli; there are no mixed-occupancy houses.

The third minority whose tracks we want to trace is the Korean. We meet this group in a neighbourhood that is neither a part of the old city, where the native population dwells, nor is it in the new city, the European district of Samarkand. The Korean *mahalla* is equidistance from the two parts of the city, a location easy to reach but at the same time marginal. For some reason, it is a territory apart. The Koreans arrived in the rural areas of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1938. In the Samarkand region they settled mainly in the *kolkhoz* of the Uzbek peasants who produced cotton; later they split away from the Uzbeks and created their own *kolkhoz* specialising in rice-growing. In the years after the war they began to move to the city. There was never a massive wave of Korean immigration to Samarkand, yet little by little over the years a Korean quarter came into being.



Image 3. *Mahalla Shangai*.

The *mahalla* where the majority of the Koreans lived was known as Shangaj (a name derived probably from their resemblance to the Chinese; some argue, however, that the name comes from the fact that the quarter is chaotic, as Chinese cities were thought to be). It was quite an unusual *mahalla*, made up of small private dwellings built according to the whims of each family, without interference from the city planners. Its intricate appearance is the result of Koreans moving to the city over a period of many years, often coming to join their families because of the lack of official control. The relative wealth of the Koreans, which came from the sale of rice, allowed them to take over spaces in the city and to enjoy a certain amount of independence. Koreans also lived in other areas of the city, both in the Russian city and in the more recently built Soviet industrial outskirts. This was the most assimilated part of the Korean population.

We have seen that the Bukhara Jews, the Lyuli, and the Koreans occupied well-defined spaces and built up their territory while keeping themselves apart from the other inhabitants. While we have identified them in the city, for the moment we have only a few tenuous traces by which to understand their way of life in the city. To begin with, one wonders how they came to have Soviet citizenship.

### 3. *Becoming Soviet citizens*

After 1917 and the arrival of the Revolution in Samarkand, the lives of the members of our three minorities changed radically. The Bukhara Jews and the Lyuli did not take an active part in the revolution, a product of Russian society and the Red Army; but they bore the effects of it. The Koreans had not yet arrived in the city. For all of them the establishment of the Soviet system implied a change involving as its first necessary phase the destruction of their cultures and ways of life.

The Bukhara Jews lost their artisan activities, businesses, and synagogues. The social order of the past and the community's relative autonomy were wiped out. The property of wealthy families was expropriated and, like the rest of the community, they were reduced to poverty. During the second half of the 1920s, the Party radically resumed its fight against traditions. Stalin's "revolution from above" began in this way, intending to create a new society consisting of peasants in *kolkhoz*, workers, and intellectuals bound to the party. The Bukhara Jews, like the rest of the native

population, had to conform. The first step in this direction was ruralisation. The campaign involving the Jews began in 1926 by decree from Moscow. The plan, which was to determine a mass population shift from cities to the countryside, was subsequently scaled down. We do not, in fact, know how many Jews were actually moved from Samarkand to the countryside. We only know that in the early 1930s approximately one-fifth of all Jewish families in the whole of Uzbekistan were working on *kolkhoz*, a total of 4,000 to 5,000 people.<sup>12</sup> It is reasonable to assume that roughly 1,500 of them came from Samarkand. Ruralisation was large-scale but short-lived. Once the emergency was over and the emphasis of the propaganda of the early years of collectivisation was toned down, Jews returned to the city whenever they could.<sup>13</sup>

The second step in forming a Soviet society concerned industry. Samarkand was not an industrial city; but if the State was going to expand Soviet urban employment, it would have to become one. The factory and the birth of an indigenous working class became, therefore, an important benchmark of the success of the policy of involving local people. As a result, the Hudjum silk factory was opened in 1927 on the border of the Jewish *mahalla* (see Image 4).

Bukhara Jews constituted a significant part of its workers, especially the women assigned to processing cocoons. Some Jews did gain administrative responsibilities, but not at the top level. Only after the Second World War did they reach important positions. In addition to working at Hudjum, Bukhara Jews also worked at Kozhzavod, a leather-working plant, and at Tekstil'naya Fabrika, a textile mill, located in the same area. Most Jews were employed in these factories during the war years when women were mobilized as part of the overall war effort.

The third step towards Soviet legitimisation of the Bukhara Jews came about through mobilisation for the defence of the homeland in war. Over 300 Bukhara Jews from Samarkand died fighting in the Second World War, approximately one out of every five adult males. This further sacrifice reinforced the legitimacy of the Bukhara Jews as fully-fledged Soviet citizens (despite the state anti-Semitism of the final years of Stalin's regime).

12. Z. Levin, "When it All Began: Bukharan Jews and the Soviets in Central Asia, 1917-1932," in Baldauf, Gammer, Loy, *Bukhara Jews in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, p. 31.

13. My estimate, assuming that ruralisation in Samarkand affects a percentage of Bukhara Jews equivalent to the average in the Republic.





Image 4. The Hudjum factory.

In this way the conditions were laid down for their co-option into the Soviet system. Bukhara Jews were not, however, passive in character; they had abilities on which to base their strategies. There were two principal reasons for their relative strength: their knowledge of both Tajik and Russian, which had enabled them to dialogue with the Russian authorities and act as mediators with the local population, and their greater degree of education compared to that of the local population.

Let us now turn our attention to the experience of the Lyuli. Before 1917 they were craftsmen and tradesmen. There were certain artisanal products for which they were reputed to be so skilful as to be unrivalled: one of these was working with precious metals such as copper, silver and gold, with which they made jewellery; another was weaving *chasvan* (the horsehair veil which covered the faces of Tajik and Uzbek women). Travelling from one *kishlak* to another, the Lyuli supplied the houses with their

copper and iron products. They sold household goods: quilts, clothes (*chapan*), boots and other objects. They traded horses and donkeys. Entertainment at bazaars, weddings and other family festivities were an exclusive vocation of the gypsies: their travelling artists performed as musicians, dancers, fighters, and jockeys. They organised the *kupkari* with their horses.<sup>14</sup> The women were also healers; they practised propitiatory rites and foretold the future. These activities were a significant source of income for the Lyuli families.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, they were not destined to find a place in the future Soviet society.

The Soviet Union did not like nomadism, particularly the kind that gravitated towards the city and seemed to hold little respect for order or to be difficult to control. In the 1920s, the Lyuli as a society had gone adrift; many had abandoned their former crafts and were repressed for the activities they continued to practice in order to survive on the margins of the Tajik and Uzbek communities of the city. The opportunities open to the Lyuli, and indeed to the rest of the population, were those of peasant or factory worker. Their position as a dangerous social class; their low level of education, and the distance they maintained from the administration and the Party meant that they could not be co-opted for any responsible post, even at a local level. They had to join the proletarian class.

In 1926 the Party decided to create farming cooperatives composed of Lyuli and thereby arrange for their transfer to and settlement in the countryside. In the 1930s they were involved in the *kolkhoz* like the Bukhara Jews. It is not clear how long this experience lasted. Some of the people interviewed told me, however, that they still had relatives in the *kishlak* and that their families had worked in a *kolkhoz*. The second option open to the Lyuli and other groups was to work in the factories. In 1926 they began to work as labourers and factory hands in leather manufacturing, building, and brick manufacturing. In 1927, there were about twenty Lyuli workers in the newly-opened Hudjum.<sup>16</sup>

14. Nazarov, *Vliyanie oktyabrskoj revolyucii na polozhenie*, pp. 81-7. *Kupkari* is a game on horseback, widespread in central Asia, in which dozens of horsemen take part, each competing for the carcass of a goat. The spectators and competitors bet on the winner. This game is often a part of marriage festivities.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-96, 102.

16. H. H. Nazarov, "Sovremennoe etnicheskoe rasvitiye Sredneaziatskikh cygan", in *Etnicheskie processy u nacionalnykh grupp Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), p. 175.



During the Second World War, the Lyuli were not drafted into the army. Evidently, they were not considered sufficiently Soviet and reliable. The Hudjum factory did, however, send its Lyuli workers to the front as volunteers.<sup>17</sup> These men were considered reliable because they were workers. Participation in the war effort contributed to a re-evaluation of the Lyuli reputation: they too, if only marginally, had sacrificed themselves in defence of the Soviet homeland and had thus become a part of it.

The route by which the Koreans became Soviet was, of course, very different. Nevertheless, their process of integration also began with an initially destructive phase: their deportation from the Far East and the dire poverty of their early years in Central Asia. They were the first of the deported minorities (Poles, Crimean Tatars, various minorities from the Caucasus) to arrive in the city. In the Far East, where the Koreans had lived under the Tsarist Empire for several decades, they had experience dealing with the Russian authorities and some of them spoke Russian. Once deported to the Samarkand region, they, like other deported minorities, experienced a process of integration and assimilation into the Russian world. It was expected that these minorities would be attracted by the “colonial” society of the city’s European neighbourhoods; they were not intended to integrate with the native peoples.

Nevertheless, the integration of the Koreans began with their encounter with the local population as they were inserted into the Uzbek *kolkhoz* not far from the city. By in the spring of 1938 the first *kolkhoz* with only Koreans workers had been set up. A little over a year later, two-thirds of the Koreans were living on all-Korean *kolkhoz* and only one-third on Uzbek *kolkhoz*. What motivated Koreans to move to their *kolkhoz* was the difference in the way of working from that of the Uzbek *kolkhoz*. The *kolkhoz* did not produce only cotton, and the Koreans asked to be allowed to devote themselves principally to their traditional crop, rice. There was a further reason, a central point in the agreement with the authorities, for the Koreans steadfast insistence on being able to specialise in rice-growing: to do so they had use their own methods, which were different from those used on the Uzbek cotton-growing *kolkhoz*. Rice-growing is particularly intense work, which the Koreans were familiar with and accustomed to carrying out with the cooperation of all family members with a fair degree of autonomy.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Not all the Koreans were sent to rural areas: about one-fifth of the deportees in the *oblast* of Samarkand were sent to its capital city. It was a small group of people, approximately 2,000 when the census was taken in 1939. Having remained in the city, the Koreans expected they would be given jobs as factory or clerical workers, while instead many of them went for months without work until they obtained authorisation to move to the *kolkhoz* of their fellow Koreans. In the small group that remained in the city, there was a political elite that acted as intermediary between the Koreans living in the country and the Soviet authorities, and cooperated with the official bodies responsible for settling Koreans in the region.

As for the Lyuli, the war presented an opportunity for the Koreans. They were not enlisted, except for a few volunteers, but did step in to take over the jobs of those who had left for the front. Although their legitimisation was not the result of having sacrificed themselves in combat, they found a way to benefit from affirmative-action programs, adapting ingeniously to the new environment and negotiating their position in the local society with the Soviet authorities. This aspect is discussed at more length below.

The three minorities were thus forced to come to terms with the new social rules and the conception, which were being established under the guidance of the Party. They had no other choice, despite what they felt to be an aggression towards their culture and way of life. They submitted to the new regulations and found themselves adapting to the change, which, after the first intense, destructive phase, continued gradually in the direction of integration and assimilation. They set out on this course from different starting points, determined by the differences in their identity as distinct groups – minorities in an urban society – and they reacted in their own ways to the changes they encountered.

Among the Bukhara Jews there were many who emigrated in the first Soviet period, while others pursued the path to integration and of these a small number at first succeeded in getting party membership and positions of importance. For the Lyuli integration was more difficult, partly due to their distance from the Russian world. The Koreans emerged as a mutually supportive minority, confidently enterprising in the new context. Since they had been deported before the war, therefore, before the other minorities that were deported to the city, they were exempt from stigmatisation as enemies or traitors of the State. They were not, therefore, treated with particular suspicion by the Russian-speaking soviet society.

#### 4. *Social affirmation in the Soviet years*

The ruralisation of the Bukhara Jews lasted only briefly, and factory work never became a central activity, although there was always an element among the workers. At the Hudjum in 1928 there were 88 Bukhara Jews out of 605 workers; in 1960 there were 193 out of 1467, so the proportion remained about the same. In roles of technical or administrative responsibility, the presence of Jews was maintained until the mid-1960s in numbers similar to that of the factory. In 1970 a Bukhara Jew became director of the factory. The majority by far of the Jewish technicians and workers were women, although the directorship went to a man.<sup>18</sup>

The presence of many women in the factory as a guarantee proletarianisation allowed the menfolk to dedicate their efforts to other work activities in the city. In this case, the behaviour of the Bukhara Jews was no different from that of the Tajiks and Uzbeks: factory work was not desirable because it was full-time, leaving no time for less formalised, more lucrative work. It was, nevertheless, important work, ideologically central to Soviet rhetoric. Thus, when the emphasis on proletarianisation dwindled and the inhabitants of the *mahalla Vostok* began to have an easier life, the need to guarantee the factory a significant number of female workers became less pressing. From the end of the 1960s on, there is no evidence of the presence of female Jewish workers in the factory registers, although there were still some Jewish women in technical and administrative roles.

Iosif Badalov, the Bukhara Jew who became manager of the factory in 1970, can be seen as an example of success. He made a career in the factory and, at the same time, cultivated good relations in politics. His position as director allowed him to communicate directly with the highest-ranking local authorities and paved the way for his nomination as president of the *Ispolkom* (executive committee) of the *Siabskij Rajon*, i.e. an administrative head of the old city. The projects he worked on in this new role were an expression of the factory's crucial importance in the lives of the city's inhabitants and an indication of the extent to which Bukhara Jews had be-

18. Personnel information on the employees of the Hudjum, indicating role and nationality, can be found in various documents of the GASO: 494/1/18/68, 494/1/44/ 1. not indicated, 494/1/442/76, 494/1/107/54 and 57, 494/1/442/110, 494/1/1109/34-46, 494/1/1271/1, 494/1/1310/6ob. and 13, 494/1/1453/16ob. and 13, 494/1/1609/87-88.

come highly-regarded Soviet citizens. The integration of the Bukhara Jews was no longer symbolised by the female workers, but by the director.

The jobs preferred by Bukhara Jews were, however, part of a wide-ranging collection of service sector activities. Large numbers of Bukhara Jews held jobs in the city administration, enabling members of the community to play an important role as mediators between the city authorities and Tajiks living in Samarkand, whose power the authorities wanted to keep in check. Yet, although there were Bukhara Jews working in the city and regional governments, their career prospects were limited. None held a key position in the local power structure and few were employed in government and ministry offices in Tashkent. There were distinguished Bukhara Jews professionals: academics, doctors, musicians, artists, etc. In the final years of Soviet rule, Bukhara Jews in *mahalla Vostok* were schoolteachers and doctors, nurses and administrators in Poliklinik 1, the district's hospital. They also worked as business agents, but did not operate stalls or shops in the Tajik-controlled Siabskij bazar, the largest in the city. It is likely that Bukhara Jews played an important, but informal role as brokers in the *blat*' economy.<sup>19</sup>

The path taken by the inhabitants of the neighbouring district, the Lyuli, has some similar aspects, but also many differences. They entered the Hudjum and the factory was for many years an important place of work for them. Among the Lyuli workers, there were those who distinguished themselves for their merits and were given just rewards. In the 1930s one Lyuli worker was singled out as a model for his efforts in production; he was then accepted into the party, elected as Soviet member of the local council, and finally as a representative in the *Rajon* Siabskij, the administration of the old city: an exemplary career.<sup>20</sup>

In 1966 there were 119 Lyuli among the Hudjum workers, 78 of whom were women. The Lyuli also worked in other factories, in particular, in the Kozhzavod and the Vinzavod. In 1973 it was estimated that of the 1,500 Lyuli resident in the city only 375 were ready and able to work. More than a third of these were employed in the Hudjum.<sup>21</sup> The people who were not

19. B. Sidikov, "Sredneaziatskie evrei: rol' i funkcii etnoreligioznogo men'shstva v zhizni vostochnogo obshchestva (obshchemetodologicheskie voprosy)," in E. V. Rtveladze, ed., *Evrei v Srednej Azii: voprosy istorii i kul'tury* (Tashkent: Fan, 2004), pp. 167-8. *Blat*' was the term used for obtaining goods and services on the black market and a range of pseudo-legal practices using personal networks and contacts for the informal exchange of favours.

20. Nazarov, *Vliyanie oktyabrskoj revolyucii na polozhenie*, p. 115.

21. Nazarov, "Sovremennoe etnicheskoe rasvitiye," pp. 176-7.

considered fit for work, i.e. women with small children, minors, and the elderly, constituted the majority of the Lyuli population of Samarkand. In actual fact, only a part of this group – the youngest children and few adults – did not work. Their occupations were the traditional ones: begging, fortune-telling, healing, goods transport or hauling, waste collection, and other small service jobs. Even those employed by the State often had second jobs. Within the same family there were members who lived in the Soviet sphere of society, others who moved between that world and the alternative lifestyle of the Lyuli, others again who remained exclusively within the sphere of the specific activities of the Lyuli. In this way, clearly no one was really outside Soviet society: within the family, connections and solidarity were maintained, providing everyone with access to the various resources available, either those relating to the Soviet sphere or to the market. They operated within the realms of legality in their Soviet activities, but when it came to trading, they undertook activities that were often considered illegal.

The Lyuli were not alone in operating in both legal and illegal environments, though they probably resorted to this grey area of the economy more than others. The city authorities, guardians of Soviet order, tried to control their activities and carried out continuous inspections of the *mahalla*. According to one resident, the police used to come to the houses once a month and demanded to know all about the occupants: whether they worked, where they worked, if their children went to school.<sup>22</sup> Begging and fortune-telling brought income to the families of the Lyuli, but they were forbidden.

The educational level of the Lyuli was much lower than that of the rest of the local population. The schools the Lyuli attended were close to the *mahalla*. One of these, no. 26, was the school in which the majority of Jewish students were concentrated. In the mid-1960s there were about fifty Lyuli enrolled in this school, but not a single Lyuli pupil had gained a final certificate in the previous ten years.<sup>23</sup> One of the causes of poor school performance was undoubtedly the burden of the past: the old people who had grown up before the war had hardly attended school at all and were almost completely illiterate. There were also more contemporary reasons for poor schooling in Lyuli culture; one of these was the tendency, especially for girls, to marry early, so they never completed their studies.

22. Interview with Mustafo, June 16, 2005.

23. Nazarov, *Vliyanie oktyabrskoj revolyucii na polozhenie*, p. 262.

Apart from a few exceptions singled out as models by the regime, the Lyuli did not become exemplary Soviet citizens. Nevertheless, in the last two decades of the regime, they found a compromise which enabled them to keep a foot in both camps, Soviet and non-Soviet, and make this position a way of life. Today these years are recounted with nostalgia; there are those who remember the days when the Lyuli had stable jobs, albeit mostly heavy manual work, such as brick-making or roadwork.<sup>24</sup>

Now let us turn to the process of Korean integration. As we have seen, the Korean path started in the countryside and moved to the city. The social status of the Koreans was affirmed largely due to their successes as rice farmers. Their role became consolidated during the course of the war, when the majority of other farmers were drafted into the army and set off for the front. Within a few years, they were supplying the city with the rice used by Uzbek and Tajik families to make *plov*, their traditional dish.

In the 1950s, Khrushchëv imposed an agrarian reform throughout the Soviet Union, aimed creating large collective farms by consolidating smaller ones. The land of the small Korean *kolkhoz* in the Samarkand region, therefore, had to become part of the Uzbek *kolkhoz* nearby. In the same years, farming methods underwent modernisation. New MTSs (machinery and tractor stations) were set up and fielded requests from the *kolkhoz*. Based on the requests, the MTS drew up a plan for use of its farm machinery, which was then approved by the Party. Modernisation of production was linked inextricably to the Russian world. Russian specialists arrived with the factories and were flanked by Russian-speaking technicians. Every *kolkhoz* needed what were called “mechanisers” to organize training courses in how to use the new farm equipment. The Koreans had their farm brigades and received the training and the equipment they needed from the MTS. Teaching was conducted in Russian.

Many of the Koreans who moved to the city had no intention of relinquishing the sources of their wealth and in time re-established relations with the *kolkhoz*. For part of the year these Koreans lived in the country and worked the land. This change underscored the special nature of Korean agriculture, which was based on the rental of fields. Beginning in the 1950s the relationship between Korean and Uzbek farmers also changed: the former worked the land they rented independently, while the latter worked and earned an income according to norms set by the *kolkhoz*. It was

24. Interview with Mustafo, December 30, 2004.

a system that guaranteed the Koreans good profits because they were able to use intensive methods to grow rice and vegetables, and their families in the city took charge of selling the produce at street markets or shipping it to Russia. Salaries in the city were low, but trading in foodstuffs grown by the *kolkhoz* allowed Korean families to earn a good living.<sup>25</sup>

The Koreans had established their own particular way of being farmers: when they were in their own *kolkhoz* they shared the land among the families, who worked it in a fairly autonomous way, without following the rules that governed the lives of the other *kolkhoz*; when they rented fields from Uzbek *kolkhoz*, they worked the land as freelance workers and sold their products independently. They had bent the rules and anticipated the agricultural reform that was to be introduced much later, when, after the demise of the Soviet Union, the *kolkhoz* were disbanded. Thanks to this anomalous activity, the Koreans had the money necessary to defend themselves from any claims by the directors of the *kolkhoz* and Soviet administration and to define urban strategies. They put their money into the education of their children and into gaining ground both in Soviet occupations and in market activities. From the 1950s onwards, they were a substantial presence in factories, as workers but also as technicians and specialists, often replacing people who had been evacuated to Samarkand during the war and were now returning to Russia.

Under Brezhnev, when “mature socialism” came into vogue, the Koreans were seen to be educated and did intellectual jobs. They were doctors, teachers, and people of culture. Many held political office or had positions of responsibility. In the 1980s some of the most important factories in Samarkand had Korean directors: Liftstrojetel’nyj zavod (lift factory), Khlopkomash (equipment for washing cotton), Kinap (optical precision instruments), Zavod Kholodilnikov (refrigerators), the Vinzavod (wine), the Khimstroj organization (chemicals). Koreans also headed construction companies, hospitals, and schools.<sup>26</sup> They held positions that had belonged to the Russian minority.

We have examined three different paths of integration. All three have one condition in common: some members of the national group were co-opted into offices of some responsibility and were singled out as examples

25. Interview with Georgij Kan, pastor of the Pentecostal church in the Shanghai quarter, conducted in the church on September 21, 2006.

26. Interview with Viktor Tsoj, Korean teacher, June 15, 2005 in his home.



for all. Another common aspect consisted of the development of integration strategies that relied on resources drawn partly from outside the official relationships and economy: this was marked in the case of the Koreans, but it was also true for the Jews and the Lyuli. The patrimonial nature of the State facilitated these careers and rendered them lucrative. Yet, these processes of integration reveal equally marked differences: the Bukhara Jews belonged to the Tajik world and became integrated into Russian circles, maintaining the ability to relate to both the immigrant community and the local majority; the Koreans aimed to assimilate with the Russians because they had no alternative, and indeed they could not have foreseen that the centrality of the Russians was destined to wane; the Lyuli integrated into the Soviet world at lower level positions and continued to be a marginal component of the local society.

## 5. Languages

To investigate how a collective identity was maintained among the Bukhara Jews, the Lyuli and the Koreans, we might consider whether they have a common language, if they have maintained a specific culture, if they conform to intermarriage strategies (endogamy) and if the factor of national identity is considered relevant. The information and material I have gathered in interviews has shown a different picture for each of the three groups. Given the limits of space I have focused on the aspect of shared language.

In the early Soviet years (1918-1928), schools in the Bukhara Jewish *mahalla* enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy. Their language, a dialect of Tajik with the addition of Hebrew and Russian words and a distinctive pronunciation, was taught. Their spoken language was, therefore, very close to the language used by the city's Tajik population, which lived in nearby *mahallas*. Their written language, however, used the Hebrew alphabet, which was a factor in maintaining an ability to read their sacred texts (just as Muslims had to know Arabic characters in order to read their scriptures).

In 1928 the Communist Party decided that all national languages should be written in the Roman alphabet. With the change in characters, Hebrew and Russian words were eliminated from the Jews' Tajik dialect. Henceforth, their written language became Tajik. All of the young people



who had studied in the early Soviet years, and all adults in general, were unable to read Roman script, while young students could not read texts in the Hebrew alphabet. The change in alphabet led to the emergence of a new illiteracy. In 1940, on the eve of the war, a new reform abolished the use of Roman characters and adopted the Cyrillic alphabet, once more creating obstacles to young Jewish and Muslim students' reading ability. Their distance from the local culture thereby increased, at the same time as Russian was made the core language in teaching and Russian culture was established as a shared reference point for the younger generations.<sup>27</sup>

In the two schools in *mahalla Vostok* attended by Jewish students, there was a shift from the clear prevalence of Tajik in the immediate post-war years to the almost total disappearance of Tajik and its replacement by Russian in the mid-1980s. No longer able to study their own language, the only viable option for Bukhara Jews was all-out Russianisation. The third language taught in the Samarkand schools, Uzbek, had little attraction for the Bukhara Jews as it was not considered a cultured language and was not used in the upper school levels. At this point, neither young Bukhara Jews nor their parents knew the Hebrew alphabet. They no longer studied Tajik in school so although they could speak it, they could neither read nor write it. They were literate only in Russian.

For the Lyuli, linguistic identity also became less important over time. Not so very long ago, perhaps about a century, the Lyuli had their own language. It was based on Tajik with many loanwords from Arabic as well as, to a lesser degree, Hebrew, Syrian, Hindi, and Turkish. In continuous evolution, this language was comprehensible to Lyuli in different regions.<sup>28</sup> Nowadays only a few weak traces survive among the old people who still know a few words, but no one is able to speak it any longer.<sup>29</sup> At school the Lyuli studied primarily in Tajik. In the 1980s the considerable reduction in the number of classes in Tajik in the schools near the *mahalla* did not induce Lyuli children to move to classes in Russian because their knowledge of the language was too weak to keep up with the Russian pupils. In the last Soviet census taken in 1989, the great majority of the Lyuli indicated Tajik

27. See L. Rzehak, "The Linguistic Challenge: Bukhara Jews and Soviet Language Policy" in Baldauf, Gammer, Loy, *Bukhara Jews in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, pp. 37-55.

28. Nazarov, *Vliyanie oktyabrskoj revolyucii na polozhenie*, pp. 53-80, which also provides a list of 171 words in this language.

29. Interviews with Mustafo, on June 16, 2005, and Bahron, then a member of the *mahalla* committee, on April 9, 2005.

as their native tongue, but many also pointed out that theirs was a particular kind of Tajik, that of their “national group.”<sup>30</sup>

For the Koreans the road to Russian language acquisition was different as their mother language was never part of the curriculum of the city's schools. The young acquired their knowledge of Russian as part of the literacy process. Korean continued to be spoken by the older generations, those who arrived as deportees, but was progressively forgotten by their children and grandchildren.

Cultural change in Uzbekistan, which marks the distance between generations, is largely due to the process of urbanisation and, therefore, changes in the work people do. In the city, schooling was in Russian and traditions were set aside. The deported peoples in central Asia remained familiar with and kept up Korean traditions; the second generation, born in Central Asia, knew the most important traditions and holidays and observed them, but saw Uzbekistan as their homeland and, in addition to Korean, spoke Uzbek and Russian; the third generation had hardly any knowledge of the Korean language and traditions and felt Russian to their mother tongue.

Having received all of their education in Russian for over half a century and living in an increasingly urban environment dominated by Russian culture, what was once a community of deported farm workers has been transformed. If we compare the Korean level of schooling with the Uzbek, the difference is startling: more than 75% of young Uzbeks attend schools where teaching is in Uzbek; they know Russian but their education has not been in Russian.<sup>31</sup> The difference in schooling between the Koreans and the local population has contributed significantly to Korean upward social mobility.

In a letter to the Politburo written in 1988, five elderly Koreans in the Tashkent region asked to be told whether the decree condemning them to deportation had ever been revoked. If it had, they wanted to know the reasons why this information had never been made public. They then asked for equal rights and explained that Koreans had become integrated into Russian soci-

30. *Itogi vsesoyuznoj perepisi naseleniya 1989 goda, chast 1* (Tashkent: Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Urbejskoj SSR po statistike 1990), p. 125; *Itogi vsesoyuznoj perepisi naseleniya 1989 goda, Nacional'nyj sostav naseleniya Uzbekskoj SSR* (Tashkent: Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Urbejskoj SSR po statistike 1990), pp. 55, 157, 241-42, 267-70.

31. The most recent Soviet figures available indicate that in Samarkand in 1986-87 there were 30,761 Uzbek students in elementary and secondary school. Of these, 23,292 were in classes where teaching was in Uzbek. GASO, 7/1/1066/115-16.

ety to such an extent that Korean children spoke to each other, their parents, and old people only in Russian.<sup>32</sup> If the work they did and the language they spoke were considered, as one Korean historian wrote, “They are no longer Koreans, although they have not completely become Russians.”<sup>33</sup>

The process of language assimilation followed a different pattern in each of the three groups. The Bukhara Jews lost the language of their religion; they were Tajik-speakers and then accepted Russian as the language of integration. The decline of Russian left the Jews with an alternative, the knowledge of Tajik, but, as we see below, this was not what they opted for. The Koreans became Russianised and would pay the price for this when the Russians and their language were driven out of the country. The Lyuli had no alternative to Tajik for many years; and then they had to opt for Uzbek.

## 6. *After the Soviet Union*

In the difficult years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, the government sought consensus by promoting a moderate Uzbek nationalism. There was no outpouring of nationalistic rhetoric in public speeches, nor was there national mobilisation. Quite simply, the government decreed that being able to speak Uzbek was required in order to hold positions of responsibility; it gradually replaced non-Uzbeks, and reinforced the use of Uzbek in teaching. The economic crisis that occurred after the breakup led to the closing of nearly all factories. There was widespread unemployment among Europeans, while the Uzbeks, few of whom had been factory workers, were not significantly affected. For minorities, especially those who came from outside the republic, the prospects were not good. Slavs, who had already begun to leave during the final years of Soviet decline, emigrated *en masse*. Members of minority groups, who had been deported to Samarkand during the war and were still living there, got out whenever they could. The Bukhara Jews, who for many years had been weighing the prospects of life abroad, did likewise.

During the period of crisis, the Bukhara Jews obtained religious and cultural freedom and re-emerged as a community. They discovered, in fact,

32. V. Kim, *Tumangan – pogranichnaya reka* (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1994), pp. 125, 129.

33. B. Pak, *Potomki strany belykh aistov (kratkaya istoriya sovetskikh korejcev)* (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1990), p. 11.

that even the Jews who seemed most assimilated were not definitively estranged from their original community. People who had moved away from the community realised they were members of a minority whose position was becoming increasingly difficult at a time when Uzbek sovereignty was being asserted and non-Uzbeks were losing ground in all fields. The Jews were not particularly affected by the post-Soviet crisis because they were not employed exclusively in the hardest-hit spheres: Party and state apparatus, industry, and growing and marketing cotton. The emergence of new types of discrimination that existed *de facto*, although they were never officially proclaimed, and the possibility (or necessity) of emigration encouraged renewed interest in community life, religion, the Hebrew language, and Jewish culture. This was preparatory to departure. The objective of the new collective identity, which the cultural renaissance tended to be based on, was not to maintain local roots but rather to break off relations with the community's territory of origin in favour of its inclusion in a larger community. Being a Bukhara Jew no longer meant belonging to a Soviet nationality group, or continuing to practise religion as a form of resistance to the pressures exerted by the Soviet regime. It signified becoming part of the international Jewish community.

Threatened by the ascendancy of the Uzbeks, the widespread impoverishment of the country, and the tensions that this inevitably caused, the Bukhara Jews saw emigration as the surest way out, especially since nearly every family already had members living abroad and everyone had someone who could take them in. The community arranged for families to be reunited with their relatives in Israel, the United States and elsewhere. In the early 1990s the teaching of Hebrew was reintroduced in one of the schools in the old city and classes included teaching the Torah, Jewish traditions, and songs in Hebrew. Many of the teachers were rabbis who had studied in Moscow or in Israel. The synagogue was functioning openly and there was an increase in the number of people attending Shabbat services. The Jewish cultural circle that opened in the *mahalla* in 1990 became an important meeting point for the community. *Shofar*, its monthly publication, carried articles on what was happening in the district, Jewish traditions, the history of the Bukhara Jews, Israel, and emigration.<sup>34</sup>

34. T. Vyshenskaya, "Resultaty espedicij v Srednuyu Aziyu", in T. Vyshenskaya, ed., *Evrei v Srendej Azii proshloe i nastoyashchee* (St. Petersburg: Peterburgskij evrejskij universitet, 1995), p. 40.

The fragmentary information we have indicates that in 1994 there were approximately 190 Bukhara Jewish students in School no. 26. Three years later, in 1997, there were none, nor were there any Bukhara Jewish teachers, as all of them had emigrated with their families.<sup>35</sup> School no. 25, the other school in the *mahalla Vostok* that had formerly been attended by Jews, underwent similar changes. In the 1990-91 school year, there were 234 Bukhara Jews out of a total of 571 students in the classes taught in Russian.<sup>36</sup> In 2005, when I interviewed the principal, the school had 630 students, mainly Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Lyuli. There were no Bukhara Jews and no students who were members of non-indigenous minorities. All the school's former teachers had also left: some emigrated, others retired. All teaching was in Uzbek and children who spoke Tajik or Russian at home had to use Uzbek as their language of study. Students also had three hours a week of English, and some lessons in Russian, which had by then become a foreign language, but not one considered particularly important.<sup>37</sup>

In these years "for sale" signs began to appear on houses in the *mahalla*. During the Soviet period, most Bukhara Jews had retained ownership of the houses they lived in and only a few large, important buildings were requisitioned by the State. In independent Uzbekistan, they sold their houses so they could raise the money they needed to emigrate. House prices were far from high. In the early post-Soviet years there was a glut on the market and prices plummeted. Houses sold for \$3,000 to \$4,000, a sum that in Israel was barely enough to pay six months' rent. Most of the buyers were Tajiks whose money came from work abroad or the commercial sector.<sup>38</sup> Life in the *mahalla* today reflects these changes: streets that in the Soviet period were thronged with people are now nearly deserted. As we have seen, the community of Bukhara Jews had already lived through periods of emigration. Contacts with the emigrants of the 1970s proved an essential point of reference for the new emigration that began in the last Soviet years and continued like an exodus in the 1990s. Families became increasingly transnational, until they found that they had all emigrated.

35. Interviews with a teacher I met at the school on May 24, 2005 and September 10, 2009.

36. S.M. Khodzaeva, *Srednaya shkola N. 25 imeni akademika I. P. Pavlova gor. Samarkanda, kratkij istoricheskij ocherk* (typescript) (April, 28, 1992, Samarkand), p. 19. The text draws on an essay written by A. Kh. Boboev in 1986.

37. Interviews with Ibadullaevna Kubaro, Principal of School no. 25, held in her office on January 25, and April 19, 2005.

38. Interview with Rabbi Yakov at his house on April 26, 2005.

Nearly all the Bukhara Jews who emigrated went to Israel or to the United States. At least initially, the choice between these two destinations did not represent a rigid division between Bukhara Jews: in many families some members went to Israel, while others went to the United States and their decisions were not seen as having created a rift. Relatives stayed in touch with one another and exchanged visits, and the two destinations were felt to be two resources a family could use to advantage. The handful of Bukhara Jews who have stayed in Samarkand go to the synagogue as a place where they can meet – and count – the others who are left. For some, the decision to remain was determined by old age, while for others it was a question of seeing to it that the community's heritage was preserved. One person keeps the cemetery in order; one is acting rabbi; others maintain contacts with Israeli-based aid agencies. The few others still in Samarkand go to the synagogue on Saturdays to ensure that there is a *minyan* (a minimum of 10 adult Jewish men) and prayers can be said. Sometimes, however, there are too few people for services to be held.<sup>39</sup> Some have joked that to be able to hold services, the synagogue gives money to poor Jews who still live in Samarkand to encourage them to attend on Saturday. Often a *minyan* is reached only thanks to the presence of visiting Jews.

The Korean community seemed to be reborn similarly during the crisis of the Soviet Union, but later, in the main, they moved elsewhere. From the mid-1990s, when in all state employment it became compulsory to speak Uzbek, the Koreans like the other Russian speakers, found themselves pushed aside. Many Koreans were forced to abandon their jobs and try to start up small private “enterprises.”<sup>40</sup> They tended to become what in Russian are called “biznesmen.” When the car manufacturer Daewoo opened a plant in Andizhan, this created the illusion among Uzbekistan's Koreans that they would be able to work as intermediaries with rich South Korea. In the meantime, Tashkent's principal market, the *Ippodrom Bazar*, held at the racecourse just outside the city, was divided in two, an Uzbek part and a Korean part, known as *Korejskij Bazar*.<sup>41</sup> Initially, business seemed to be booming and hopes were high.

39. Interviews with Abram at his home and in the synagogue, January 8-9, 2005.

40. Interview with Georgij Kan, September 21, 2006 inside the Shangaj church.

41. G. Kim, V.Khan, “Aktual'nye problemy korejskoj diasporj v Central'noj Azii,” *Diasporj*, 2-3 (2001), p. 186.

For a while many Koreans held down more than one job so their total income would be enough to live on. Then many left to work abroad for relatively brief periods, from a few months to two or three years, to earn money to invest in private economic activities when they returned to Uzbekistan. Russia and Korea were the destinations most often chosen during the large-scale temporary emigration from Uzbekistan that occurred at the time. For the temporary emigrants, problems began when they returned. The deteriorating economic situation, growing restrictions on commerce, and continual prevarication by the authorities caused the failure of many of the Koreans' attempts at entrepreneurship. All that was left were a few activities that can now be considered typically Korean: selling salads at the bazaar, wholesaling onions and exporting them to city markets in Russia. Rice-growing, once a Korean speciality, is now done principally by Uzbeks.

The Koreans in Uzbekistan were forced, therefore, to look at emigration in a different light: no longer as a temporary situation that allowed them to earn money to invest in Uzbekistan, but as a definitive choice. Koreans found it difficult, however, to cut their ties with the city where their roots lay and began to emigrate only in the mid-1990s. Their departure from the city gained much attention as the *mahalla* Shanghaj emptied. Some of the houses where Koreans lived still belong to them, even though their inhabitants, or many of them, have left. Uzbeks, who came to live in Samarkand from *kishlaks* near the city, bought many of the houses. In fact, the language one now hears being spoken in the streets of the *mahalla* is Uzbek. As in the *mahalla Vostok*, emigration has sparked change in the occupants, the languages and culture, as well as a rearrangement of spaces.

It is difficult to estimate how many of Shanghaj's Koreans have left. According to one contemporary, in 2006 one-third of the families had emigrated in their entirety and of those remaining, half of their members were living abroad. This means that over half of the district's Korean inhabitants no longer live there. According to another Korean, the minister of a Presbyterian church in another quarter, formerly half of Shanghaj's residents were Korean, while now less than 10% are. These are rough estimates, which nevertheless leave no doubt as to the scale of Korean emigration.<sup>42</sup> The Koreans have networks – mostly based on family ties – that extend from the regions bordering on Central Asia to Moscow and Siberia; and the majority of the emigrants from Samarkand went to Russia and to Kazakhstan.

42. Interview with Georgij Kan.



Just as among the Bukhara Jews, when their prospects became insecure the Korean families began to reinforce internal ties within the community. These were necessary both in order to stay and, even more so, to depart. In this situation, their shared religion could be an important point of reference, as the churches provided a meeting place and link with other neighbourhoods. For the Koreans of Samarkand, however, this did not involve a return to the religion of long ago. Decades of Soviet repression of religion and traditions and the processes of assimilation and Russianization endured by the Koreans created such a break that it would have been difficult for them to return to their traditional religion. Presbyterianism, which came to Uzbekistan with support from the United Church of South Korea (*Obedinënnaya Tsekov Yuzhnoj Korei*), now unites the Korean community. Missionaries from South Korea and the United States, who first appeared in the mid-1990s, began to spread this religion, hitherto unknown to Koreans in Central Asia. They brought financing with them and built churches in all the cities in the republic. Five Protestant churches were built in Samarkand and a large part of the Korean community attends a religious service at least once a week. Some of the ministers are South Korea citizens, while others are Uzbekistani Koreans who trained in Korea, where young Korean candidates for the ministry are sent to work as clergymen for short periods of time. In Samarkand's Korean churches, the sermons are normally given in Russian, but once a week they are in Korean. The churches organise free courses in the Korean language and computer skills, as well as other cultural activities.

One of Samarkand's Presbyterian churches was built in the *mahalla* Shangaj in the early 1990s (see Image 5). It is an enormous building with a hall for services and sermons, a smaller prayer room, a nursery school, a language laboratory, choir practice and music rooms, and a flat for the minister and his family.

The church rapidly became an important meeting place for district residents. However, it closed in 2005. On Sundays the faithful among Shangaj's shrinking Korean community are taken by bus to the church in Super on the outskirts of the city, an area that was once a working-class neighbourhood. Just over 100 people participate in the Sunday service. A similar number attend the church in the Mikrorajon district. Their number is dwindling as Koreans continue to emigrate.

The Lyuli, despite being beset by economic difficulties, unemployment, and under-employment, did not opt for mass emigration. After the collapse



Image 5. The Presbyterian church of the *mahalla* Shangaj.

of the Soviet Union, they found themselves in a vicious cycle of poverty. As one contemporary explained it: you cannot get a job if you don't have a school qualification, but to get one you have to have the money to attend a school and then more money to pay whoever helps you find employment. The Lyuli have no money, therefore they have neither education nor employment.<sup>43</sup> The few Lyuli who still work as employees of a company or state agency are always in the lowest-ranking posts, and therefore have meagre salaries, not enough to live on. These are usually people who are identified as Uzbeks or Tajiks on their passports.<sup>44</sup> Today the most common jobs among the Lyuli are those marginal activities which they used to do in the past, but which they originally did to supplement their regular work, now largely non-

43. Interview with Istat, member of the *mahalla* committee, on April 22, 2005.

44. Interview with a neighbour of the *mullah* of the Lyuli, April 20, 2005.

existent. One of the most common sources of income is begging. It is chiefly the women, sometimes with small children, who ask for money on the streets or at the traffic lights, at the risk of attracting the attention of policemen. The surest way to get money is to follow the traditional rules and offer something in exchange. The women usually work in pairs, partly for safety, and turn up in the morning at the market stalls in the bazaar or at the shops, bringing little braziers with burning herbs (*hazor-ispand*) whose white, perfumed smoke, combined with a few magic or religious words, wards off evil spirits and brings good business for the whole day. The traders usually accept this service and give a small gift or money as recompense.

In recent years begging has once again become the reason migration to areas outside the city or outside the borders of Uzbekistan. The Lyuli had partially abandoned this activity during the Soviet era when nomadism and begging were forbidden. Today it is mainly the women who earn money this way. Sometimes they take their babies with them if they are still nursing, but more often they leave their children in Samarkand with their families. These migrations generally last only a few months. The main destination is Kazakhstan, which is a richer country where street-trading is allowed. The Lyuli often rent a flat, no longer travelling with tents as they did before the war. In Kazakhstan they can beg, tell fortunes, and peddle various articles. Other frequent destinations are some of the Russian cities. Often those migrating travel to Moscow, where the chances of earning are higher, but houses are hard to find for those not registered as residents of the city. The Lyuli women are therefore often forced to sleep in stations or elsewhere in the rough.<sup>45</sup>

Lately other traditional activities, which the women did not abandon in the Soviet era, have reappeared as a substantial contribution to the Lyuli family income. Many women, usually the elderly, are known throughout the *mahalla* for their skill in reading the future. Those who make and sell amulets have many Tajik and Uzbek customers in the city. Other important activities include healing and various forms of traditional medicine, which have been handed down from generation to generation. A more humble job now widespread in the city consists of hauling goods with a handcart to the bazaar or from the bazaar to a buyers' home. Youngsters often do this, though sometimes older Lyuli also.

These carts are also used for jobs involving waste disposal. The town council stipulates that occupants of private houses and offices must take

45. Various interviews, including that with Mustafo referred to above.



Image 6. A street of the Lyuli *mahalla*.

their rubbish to the depots either early in the morning or in the evening. This has created a job: people with a handcart or wheelbarrow collect the rubbish and carry it to the depots. They are paid a small sum for this or given something to eat. Every house in the centre has someone to collect their waste, but these are obviously the poorest people. Often Lyuli boys do this job with their handcarts. Part of the rubbish consists of waste vegetables and fruit, which the Lyuli take home to feed their animals. Another part is made up of bottles and other items that have some value, and these can be taken to where they are exchanged for a little money. The rest is thrown away. Naturally, it is forbidden to discard rubbish locally, but sometimes this is simpler than carrying it to a distant depot. A substantial amount of the rubbish is thrown into a dump in the centre of the *mahalla*. It should be mentioned that a few public institutions are located not far from the *mahalla* and take advantage of this Lyuli habit to dump their waste, too. Thus, rubbish piles up in the centre of the *mahalla*. Apparently, the *Okimyat* has recently levied a substantial high fine on members of the *mahalla* committee for having allowed this to happen.



Image 7. At the centre of the *mahalla*.

As we have seen, the majority of Lyuli children attended schools where Tajik was spoken in the Soviet era. Since the early 2000s, teaching has been only in Uzbek or Russian, and among the pupils at the elementary level, there are many Lyuli. The few students who manage to complete middle school encounter significant difficulty trying to continue on to high school or university. Many of them report that one has to pay backhanders to be admitted and to pass exams. These payments levied by principals and teachers in senior schools and universities make it prohibitive for the children of poor families. Since the official language is now Uzbek, everyone has to be able to speak it. The younger Lyuli, therefore, have to study in a language different from the one they speak at home, one which is written in the Latin alphabet, now unfamiliar to their parents who learned to read in Cyrillic. The lack of scholastic success among the Lyuli children seems to be linked to the government's educational choices and policies and the corrupt teaching system, not merely to the poverty of their parents.

During the last twenty years the social integration policies adopted by the Soviet system have disappeared, but none have been created in their

place. Today there are few opportunities to emerge from social exclusion. The State is unlikely to allocate resources in the near future to help integrate this minority group, which is neither much liked nor very sizeable. The Uzbek priority in this phase of consolidation of the new nation actually heightens the isolation of this Tajik-speaking minority. Islam might have a significant role, as it constitutes the only obvious element of union in the society, and the only source and defence of common values. "For Islam there are no differences of nationality," says the *mullah* of the Lyuli.<sup>46</sup> Islam today is granted very little autonomy from the State, however, and only partially reaches the Lyuli, who keep to themselves in this, too, with their own *mullah* and their own rituals.

## 7. Conclusions

We have retraced the paths of integration of three minorities in Samarkand. Each has experienced a different process, and none are linear. A century ago each was a group with clear culturally distinctive features. Thirty years ago these differences seemed fewer, while the similarities had become more marked after a long period of participation in the Soviet regime had elapsed. There were, nevertheless, still some distinctive features: the city continued to have *mahalla* and housing which formed national enclaves, the relationships between families gave preference to groups of their own kind, and people were labelled, even in social relationships, on the basis of their "nationality." Memory of the past was weak because the violent policies of the first Soviet decades had created a breach: intellectuals and books disappeared, schools and places of worship were closed.

Throughout the Soviet period the one element that maintained the definition of group membership was the "nationality" indicated on passports. The bureaucratic national labels had been created as an instrument of control, and to encourage processes of assimilation. As the years passed, policies of implementation based on quotas for access to jobs and official positions continued to reinforce inequalities between citizens, resulting paradoxically in the creation of "nationalities" that had no specific cultural characteristics, but were nonetheless important to each person, to the extent that real identity groups were formed.

46. Interview with the *mullah*, April 20, 2005.



Twenty years ago, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the processes of integration began to differentiate: the Soviet sense of belonging to a whole was lost and a trend towards the reconstruction of inclusion groups began. New strategic identities were defined within the framework of the new conditions. The road open to the Bukhara Jews was emigration from the former Soviet territory; the Koreans built relations which allowed them to move from one ex-Soviet republic to another in search of autonomous spaces; the Lyuli, discriminated everywhere, sought to keep a stable foothold in the land which might be the base from which to migrate temporarily and, therefore, they made no definitive changes.

The national identity groups formed after the Soviet Union were obviously different from those of a century earlier. Much had changed for the Jews, the Koreans, and the Lyuli. Nevertheless, it was important to build up a shared sense of belonging based partly on references to a distant past before the Soviet Union. The recovery of traditions, language, and the rebirth (only for the Jews) of a distinctive, ancient, religious identity, created continuity, whether real or invented, which were significant in making modern-day choices.

The city is the great stage for these changes. Houses bought, sold or restyled, use of public spaces, transformation in employment activities: all form a record of the shifting populations and their cultural diversities, weaving into the city's fabric the history of the people who have lived there.





LIZA CANDIDI T.C.

## Sedentary Migrants in Germany's New Capital

The caesura that turned the planet's geo-political connotations upside-down, accelerating the end of the short century, is inextricably tied to Berlin, the city that today best symbolises the contradictions of the age of ideologies. Currently the German capital, in search of a solid and cosmopolitan identity, plays the role of a welcoming metropolis, destination of important migratory movements especially from Eastern Europe. But even back in 1989 one extremely significant minority in particular, coming from what could be defined as a "sedentary migration," affected its social-economic fabric. In this case, the oxymoron is fitting as a definition of the nearly 17 million Germans of the ex-GDR who, upon Germany's re-unification, merged with the Federal Republic. In just a few months they – without physically relocating – found themselves living under a completely different legal and political order, based on a socio-economic system and principles, which were, in certain ways, the opposite of their own.

East Germans currently represent about 20% of Germany's total population, almost the same percentage of so-called "people of migratory origins."<sup>1</sup> For all intents and purposes therefore they can be considered a minority, even in ethnological terms, since they belong to a strongly self-ascriptive identity sharing social and symbolic processes that are perceived

1. In 2010 "people with a migratory background" (*Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund*) represented 19,6% of the entire German population. This statistical category, introduced in 2003, indicates the demographic group made up of immigrants, as well as their descendants, in the Federal Republic from 1950 till today. This includes not only foreigners (*Ausländer*), but also anyone born in Germany of at least one foreign parent, as well as the *Spätaussiedler*, German citizens born outside of the national borders. More than half of the people with migratory backgrounds hold a German passport.

as being different from those of the West. The content of this identity coalesced on the rubble of the Wall – therefore only after the end of what was actually its common identification factor – is summarized in the sharing of a precise past (the GDR) or, in the case of younger generations, of a territorial origin of ever distinct cultural traits.

In this specific case the 1989 censuses of the still-divided Berlin counted 2,100,000 West Berliners and 1,200,000 East Berliners. Certainly the mere numerical data is not sufficient for defining the latter as a minority in the strictest sense of the word; however, they are to be considered such because of their limited social influence as well as the scant possibility of their accessing economic resources and capital management. In this regard some aspects will be taken into consideration here, which, out of necessity, will only be alluded to. The main analysis perspective pertains to the handling of the East German past in urban space, in terms of identity negotiation and memory dialectics. A few considerations on the social-economic situation as it relates to the city and its native minority will then follow.

### 1. *Streets, monuments, buildings:*

#### *Erasing socialism and resurrecting old Prussia*

If change is identified as Berlin's only historical constant – “condemned forever to becoming and never being”<sup>2</sup> – its continuous change since 1990 has intensified and accelerated to the point of overwhelming most urban traces of the GDR in a short amount of time and at a relentless pace. The Senate of a city lacerated by its own history, claiming its right to normalcy, initially engaged in an abrupt mending of the two sides that had been divided for 40 years and, then, in a more subtle attempt at standardisation so as to conceal the very signs themselves of the suture. Since 1998, in particular, with the transfer of the Federal Government institutions from Bonn to Berlin, the dialectic of demolition and reconstruction, the only believed capable of forging the strong and unified image of a European capital, became increasingly intense.

2. K. Scheffler, *Berlin. Ein Stadtschicksal* (Berlin: Fannel & Walz, 1989 [orig. ed. 1910]), p. 219. A destiny of change has been attributed to Berlin in much literature, as if this city, taking the burdens of the past upon itself, was marked by the need to redeem itself in the eyes of future generations by systematically eliminating its own previous image.



Map 1. Figure ground plan of the centre of Berlin, 1989-2015: in black new buildings realized from 1989 to 2000 and suggested planning from 2000 to 2015. Source: Digitale Schwarzpläne, Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, 2000 ([www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de](http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de)).

In this sense an urban ethnography in Berlin after 1989 can not only decipher the memory policies and the self-legitimizing dynamics implemented by the new German institutions, but also help us understand the mechanisms that East Berliners adopt in order to relate to a city suddenly deprived of its previous topographical and cultural references. The condensation of the sense of the past that is inscribed in – or eliminated from – the urban fabric can be seen in the following examples, which, while certainly not exhaustive, are believed to be emblematic of the altered significant relationships that tie the eastern Berlin minority to its “new” home town.

While seemingly subtle, an initial, radical, and capillary modification was that of the street names. Street, square, and station names are culturally orientating and offer a social sense to urban contexts, re-focusing – in a punctual and unconscious manner – on the past a community recognises as fundamental. Thanks to this subliminal cohesive strength, the street naming policy therefore becomes particularly strategic in the alternation of power.<sup>3</sup> Immediately following the city's reunification, an intense debate ensued about what names would be appropriate for the new face of Berlin. There were some Christian Democrats who proposed changing every street name in the eastern part; that motion was, however, immediately blocked by the protests of the administrative districts. The contractual dynamics were so delicate that in 1993 a separate, independent committee for street names (formed mainly, however, by western Germans) was established. The first signs to disappear were the various Lenins: Leninallee regained its old name of Landsberger Allee and Leninplatz, with its statue of the Russian revolutionist became United Nations Square. Then it was the turn of those communists who, despite having distinguished themselves as anti-fascists, committed serious human rights violations “under a different regime.”<sup>4</sup> Also some non-German communist names – or presumed as such (e.g. François-Noël Babeuf and Ho Chi Minh) – were removed. The signage to be changed was usually substituted by the previous name; even in the case that one was unsuitable due to Nazi references, older names or names of waterways or natural landmarks, or non-controversial personalities were used.

Perhaps the most significant change in the east of the city was that relating to the street dedicated to the famous feminist Clara Zetkin.<sup>5</sup> Despite the

3. Street names mainly belonged to communicative memory (e.g.: “Bridge Street” or “Old Mill Street”) up to the Napoleonic era. Only thereafter did they begin to take on the ideological characters typical of cultural memory. Nowadays the street names are an established part of both cultural and communicative memory, since they unite ideology to the daily routine expressed in its orality. See D. Bering, K. Großsteinbeck, M. Werner, “Wegbeschreibungen. Entwurf eines Kategorienrasters zur Erforschung synchronischer und diachronischer Straßennamenkorpora,” *Zeitschrift für germanistische Linguistik*, 27 (1999), pp. 135-66; N. Pethes, J. Rüchatz, eds. *Dizionario della memoria e del ricordo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), pp. 400-03.

4. In the beginning of the 90s the theories, which tend to equate the GDR's state socialism with the national socialist regime, were popular also in the public opinion.

5. Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) – an activist first in the SPD, then in the Spartacus League, and finally in the KPD – was one of the main protagonists in the struggle for women's rights and universal suffrage.

fondness aroused by the charismatic figure – depicted even on the East German 10 Mark banknote – the committee decided that the street leading to the Reichstag (the Parliament Building) could not be dedicated to someone who opposed parliamentary democracy, and therefore decreed the reinstatement of the old name of Dorotheenstraße after the wife of Prince-Elector Friedrich Wilhelm. What many considered to be an “arrogant and dogmatic westernization” was widely exploited by the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism), the heir party of the GDR's *Sozialistische Einheitspartei* (SED), which was increasingly broadening its electoral constituency during those years and playing on the malaise of the *Ostdeutsche*. Nevertheless, the intense mobilisation in favour of Zetkin proved to be in vain.

Strong controversy also arose over the case of the Niederkirchnerstraße – the street on which the Land of Berlin Parliament is also located – dedicated to the communist resistance fighter who died in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. In 1993, some of the exponents of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) in full anti-communist fervour led a campaign to remove the reference to a “Soviet agent” and substitute it with Preußischer Landtag in order to “remember Prussia, to which we are grateful for our stability.”<sup>6</sup> If it was decided to maintain the name of the anti-fascist despite the heated debate, it was only because the Gestapo's torture rooms were located on that same street. And again, Artur-Becker-Straße, named after a communist who died in the Spanish Civil War, was changed back to the previous Kniprodestraße, in honour of a 1300s Teutonic knight famous for his valour in war. One of Prenzlauer Berg's main traffic arteries, Dimitroffstraße, which commemorated the well-known Bulgarian politician, returned to being Danziger Straße, the German name of the city of Gdansk which was lost after the Second World War: a decision that, in a time of poorly appeased international fears toward the United Germany, certainly did not meet with Polish approval.<sup>7</sup> Another example among the most important streets is the Otto-Grotewohl-Straße, in honour of the President of the Ministers of the GDR, which became Wilhelmstraße, after the militarist German emperor.

6. See H.W. Korfmann, “Kampf um die Straßen,” *Kreuzberger Chronik*, 48 (2003), also the previous quotation. It should be noted that during Nazism the Preußischer Landtag building was the Haus der Flieger, Hermann Göring's office.

7. When it was time to change the name of Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße, the then Transport Senator cautiously avoided re-establishing the previous “Alsace Street” and, to reassure the French, decided to use the ancient name of Torstraße.

Even in recent years, Berlin's street names have been the focus of intense memory battles: just consider the complicated affair concerning the Rudi-Dutschke-Straße, the recent dedications of streets to GDR dissidents (as the Jürgen-Fuchs-Straße in 2011) or to categories considered under-represented, such as women and Jews, as well as key figures of international diplomacy, to bear witness to the new cosmopolitan Berlin. The price of this political correctness, however, was not so much paid by the East Berliners<sup>8</sup> – to whom only a few names were saved from those cleaned off, e.g. Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Thälmann – as much as by the city itself, which gave up the depth of its history for a less controversial public memory.

Other significant disputes about voluntary *direct sources*,<sup>9</sup> that is those produced deliberately in order to be transmitted to descendants, regarded the GDR's monuments; with their semantic rhetoric they immediately became the privileged object of the socialist memory *damnatio*. Initially, as in other countries of the former Soviet bloc, even in Germany the prospect of completely removing all political monuments and placing them in a separate space, carefully relegated to the confines of a museum, was debated.<sup>10</sup> That project was substituted soon after by directions from the "Initiative Politische Denkmäler" Committee, established in order to evaluate the actual ideological imprint of the GDR monuments and, at the same time, consider the historical context into which they were inserted, the Ricoeurian element of "contingency in history."<sup>11</sup>

The most astonishing intervention – not only for East Berliners, but also for the entire population of East Germany – was the elimination of the 18 meters of red granite with which sculptor Nikolai Tomskey created the famous Lenin-Denkmal in 1970.

8. During interviews conducted in Berlin for my doctoral research (2006-2009), I noted widespread difficulty in recalling the old names, even of streets oft-travelled in the past or the current titles of urban areas not frequented today.

9. Pierre Nora identifies them as "direct sources (tradition)" as opposed to the indistinct mass of "indirect sources (residues)". P. Nora, *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990), pp. 26-27.

10. Cf. Szoborpark, "Park of the communist dictatorship statues," at the edge of Budapest. For the debate about socialist monuments in Berlin see n.a., *Erhalten-Zerstören-Verändern? Denkmäler der DDR in Ost-Berlin* (Berlin: Schriftenreihe Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand, 1990).

11. P. Ricoeur, *Ricordare, dimenticare, perdonare. L'enigma del passato* (Ital. trans.) (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), p. 94.





Image 1. Lenin-Denkmal before the demolition, Friedrichshain, 4 November 1991. Photo by W. Mrotzkowski, in B. Kramer, ed., *Demontage... Revolutionärer oder restaurativer Bildersturm?* (Berlin: Kramer Verlag, 1992), p. 52.

The statue, placed on a 26-meter pedestal, stood triumphantly in the homonymous square, at the centre of the new complex of skyscrapers that offered lodging to 1,200 families. In the autumn of 1991, after 20 years of prestige, the proposal to demolish it materialized, representing the logical continuation of the 1989 peaceful revolution for the then-Mayor Eberhard Diepgen (CDU).<sup>12</sup> In order to avoid cumbersome inheritances, even the SPD

12. "Berliner Zeitung," (November 6 and 15, 1991) in B. Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 197.

(Social Democratic Party of Germany) approved the motion to remove the monument's protection status, thereby giving the go-ahead to its demolition. Then began the first great mass-mobilisation against the West's claim to represent Germany's "good" side and so much so that Lenin-Denkmal emerged – as the *Berliner Zeitung* wrote at that time – as emblematic of the GDR history to be saved.

In order to avoid causing unforeseen tension for the new government by blowing up the symbol in the lives of 16 million people, it was finally decided that the statue would be dismantled instead of destroyed. But even its dismantling proved to be more difficult than expected due to the numerous attempts to sabotage it: after half a million marks and months of opposition to the work, the 129 granite pieces of Lenin were buried in a gravel quarry, to which new layers of dirt are added every now and then to prevent the theft of relics of the sculpture by the nostalgic or communism's grave robbers. In its place a humble stone fountain accentuates the resounding absence of the beloved sculpture from the square. This matter is still quoted in interviews conducted during my research as a typical example of the "culture demolition" of the East even by younger generations who, while not having been direct witnesses, take possession of their families' memories, making themselves spokespeople for an inter-generational uneasiness.

In 1991, the colossal bronze bust on Greifswalder Straße dedicated to Ernst Thälmann – President of Communist Party and key member of the Comintern who died in Buchenwald in 1944 – was one of the socialist monuments to be eliminated. The 50-ton figure completed in 1986 by Lev Kerbel has a rather strong resemblance to Lenin's face, so much so that the Ostberliners called it – with a play on words – "Lehmann." Precisely for its ostentatious and artificial heroism the statue was not at all popular but, once the Wall was down, as soon as removing it was mentioned, "Ossis'" resentment, frustrated by the dismantling of the Lenin statue, was vented in Thälmann's defence.<sup>13</sup> The petition for the removal of the bust, promoted by those who considered the communist Stalin's dangerous ally, was overturned, not so much due to admittedly intense popular mobilisation, as much as for the huge expense that the removal would have added

13. *Wessis* and *Ossis* – contraction of *Westdeutsche* and *Ostdeutsche* – are ironic nicknames Germans often call each other. While initially the terms had derogatory connotations, over time they have entered into everyday use, losing their controversial character.

to the young Senate's already critical budget. Thanks to its less frequented and somewhat hidden location, the Thälmann monument was only purged of propagandist writings and is currently seen with much greater benevolence, a symbol of one of the small East Berliner victories against "western colonization" attempts.

On the other hand, the statue dedicated to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels appears all but triumphant. Back in 1950 the Politbüro wanted to place a monument honouring the foundation myths of the GDR in the area where the castle of the Hohenzollern family once stood. No design proved to be good enough for the celebrities prior to the one created – together with other artists – by sculptor Ludwig Engelhardt who inaugurated the Marx-Engels-Forum in 1986. The more than 60 meter-long green area between the Palast der Republik and the television tower was designed as a trail leading from west to east: from the marble stelae at the west, representing human figures oppressed by capitalism and poverty to the bronze stelae at the opposite end, representing "the dignity and beauty of free men" as socialists. The statues of the two philosophers, double their natural size, were unmistakably positioned toward the east in a posed posture with Marx seated and Engels standing to the left. The very *non*-heroic 'waiting' posture rendered them famous in Berlin as "the retired ones" and there were those in the GDR who, in jest, spread the rumour that they too were waiting for their visa to go west. Today, these characteristics have rendered the Marx-Engels-Forum more of a public than political sculpture, in which the statues invite proximity and interaction. The tourists who have themselves photographed on Marx's lap, the hands of communism's heroes painted blood red, and every kind of writing on the pedestal (among which the most famous – "It's not our fault!" – with the *not* then erased) have re-established Engelhardt's work as ideologically innocuous, so much so that it was inserted among the list of protected monuments. In Berlin, however, that may not be a guarantee, seeing that – based on the FRG/GDR unification contract – private investors may use protected land.<sup>14</sup> Further, in 2009 an international competition for new development ideas for the Forum was held to render it "more attractive and contemporary" and move the statues away from the centre.

14. The unification contract between the GDR and the FRG guarantees the right of restitution (*Rückgabe*), rather than compensation (*Entschädigung*) to the original owners of the properties, which were expropriated during Nazism or during socialist forced collectivization. This applies within certain criteria, which also considers public use of the land.



Image 2. Facing West. The Marx-Engels-Forum half-turned, Mitte, June 2012.

Meanwhile, it seems rather indicative that due to work on expansion of the metro system, the monument was moved a few meters further north, but this time – in order to avoid any misunderstandings – facing west. Nor is it a coincidence that the placement of the stelae was also reversed: those representing the oppression were relocated to the east, and those symbolizing freedom to the west.

Other significant removals occurred during the initial years of the reunification; for example, those monuments dedicated to the GDR border guards, which raised only feeble objections, given the scarce popularity of the *Grenzpolizisten*. Thanks to the special bi-lateral pacts between Germany and the Russian Federation, the Soviet monuments – in which over 21,000 soldiers who died during the liberation of Berlin are buried – were maintained. Curiously even the numerous Stalin quotes, which were engraved on the Treptow's monumental charnel house built in 1946 of red granite from Hitler's Chancery, remain intact. Also significant is the fate of the socialist statues and works of art removed from Berlin after 1990; most of which – outcasts of an age which, though long gone, still

provokes fear – found rest in a depot (inaccessible to the inhabitants) on the edge of the city.<sup>15</sup>

When we speak of ousting East Berliners from the right to recognize their own past in the city's public memory, certainly the most famous and emblematic case relates to the Schlossplatz, involving the very central Spree's island, which in recent years has seen the demolition of the Palast der Republik, headquarters of the GDR Parliament, and the beginning of the reconstruction from scratch of the Stadtschloss, the Hohenzollern family's castle which at one time stood on the same square.<sup>16</sup>

The Republic Palace, built in 1973 by the Honecker Government, was intended to be the expression – more declared than actual – of the political space shared by citizens, so much so that the impressive, 180 meter-long building, flagship of rationalist architecture, housed not only the People's Parliament but also a prestigious theatre, art exhibition hall, recreational centres, and cafes and restaurants regularly frequented by East Berliners.

The euphoria after the collapse of the Wall had not yet dissipated when the first plans to demolish the Palast were already being discussed; then it was closed to the public in 1990 and submitted to a lengthy redevelopment, which ended only in 2003. That year, an unprecedented mass mobilisation began in an attempt to save the building, considered precious historical testimony and an essential part of the city, now void of ideological connotations. However, the efforts of the fierce civic initiatives, both German and international, with public petitions and protests, awareness campaigns and

15. Part of this collection was the subject of the video documentation I made in 2008 ("The Secret Depot," included in my thesis). Only recently (2012) it seems that the project to create a public exhibition showing the socialist statues, which once stood in Berlin, is materializing. Annette Tietenberg wrote about the GDR monuments: "The naiveté of their claim to meaning and power makes the monuments of the GDR so fascinating. Where else does the direct, frank representation of power appear so openly? [...] Only those who still believe in objectivity and truth, who are entirely free of doubt, need defend themselves against Lenin statues. For all others, the Lenin monument was a relic of times gone by." A. Tietenberg, "Marmor, Stein und Eisen bricht," in B. Kramer, ed., *Demontage... Revolutionärer oder restaurativer Bildersturm?* (Berlin: Kramer Verlag, 1992), p. 116 (This English translation is in B. Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, p. 208).

16. For a detailed description, see L. Candidi, "Il dibattito della memoria nella Berlino postsocialista. Il Palast der Republik e altre contese sul passato", *Italia Contemporanea*, 245 (2006), pp. 617-32 and C. Bianchetti, T. Berlanda, "I paradossi del castello," in A. Chiarloni, ed., *Oltre il Muro. Berlino e i linguaggi della riunificazione* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2009), pp. 11-24.



Image 3. Postcard of the now demolished Palast der Republik, Schlossplatz (ex Marx-Engels-Platz). Photographer unknown, ca. 1980.

occupations of the building, proved in vain. In 2006 the beloved Palast began to be dismantled brick-by-brick (“and not demolished,” as the banners blocking it sarcastically declared). Only after three years and an outlay of more than 100 million Euros, the square was liberated of the obtrusive inheritance. In January 2009, with the final section down, on the adjacent edge of the Spree, a text in large cubic characters stating: “The GDR never existed” (*Die DDR hat’s nie gegeben*) appeared at night.<sup>17</sup>

Preliminary excavations are currently being done in the empty square for the complex reconstruction of the Hohenzollern castle, heavily bombarded during the Second World War and then blown up by the GDR government, which had no intention of reconstructing the symbol of Prussian

17. Three years later, this bitter impression in the empty square is confirmed by the cumbersome informative space (Humboldt-Box), which enthusiastically describes the reconstruction of the castle, outlining the capital’s revitalization.





Image 4. “The GDR never existed”, Schlossplatz, January 2009. A few days after the complete removal of the Palast der Republik. In the background reconstruction of the Bauakademie in progress.

militarism. While awaiting the opening of the construction site, the Federal Government and the Senate have already allocated a part of the necessary financing (nearly 620 million Euro, according to a provisional assessment), and an association of volunteers in the meantime is collecting private funds to finance the reconstruction of the Baroque stuccoes.<sup>18</sup> Slogans supporting the initiative read: “It’s legitimate for a capital to strive to have its own castle back.” All the more reason since reconstruction of the Prussian symbol of a solid and strong Germany is preferable to conservation of the parliament of a political system stranded in socialist disenchantment.

18. See S. Beikler, “Grünes Licht für Berliner Schloss,” *Der Tagesspiegel* (July 6, 2011) at: <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/haushaltsausschuss-gruenes-licht-fuer-berliner-schloss/4365994.html>. In November 2008 the architectural competition for the “Reconstruction of Berlin’s Castle and the construction of the Humboldt-Forum” was won by the Italian architect Franco Stella, who was entrusted – not without bitter controversy – with the project.





Image 5. The reconstructed Castle as it will appear in 2018. View from Unter den Linden, Schlossplatz, © Förderverein Berliner Schloss/eldaco, Berlin.

The Palast – sacrificed to the reconstruction of a “false” and “anachronistic” castle considered by many to be “inconceivable” – is still bitterly missed by East Berliners, who associate the Palast with intense memories of private, not political, life. Further, its removal marks one of the most serious defeats for a city like Berlin, which for centuries was used to blending memories of various ages into chaotic architectural and almost oneiric dissonances, openly demonstrating history’s scars.

The Castle Square and the entire Mitte neighbourhood have been the objects of noteworthy transformations and reconstructions, precisely there where, at one time, socialist buildings stood. An example of this is the rebuilding of the Bauakademie, the Royal Academy of Construction designed in 1832 by K. F. Schinkel and torn down in 1961 to make room for the GDR’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was then – although with no fanfare – torn down in 1996. It is important to note how the ministerial building – tied exclusively to the administration and politics, unlike the beloved Palast – is not spontaneously recalled by any of those interviewed during this investigation, despite the decades of imposing presence in Unter den Linden.

In 2007 just a few meters from the Bauakademie, the Schinkelplatz garden was also brought back from the depths of time, just as it appeared in the 19th century. And in the same square the building, once the headquarters of the ancient Kommandantenhaus, was resurrected.<sup>19</sup> The reconstruc-

19. The building, constructed in 1653 then enlarged in 1873, also accommodated Napoleonic troops and was the setting of the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944. In 1945 it was bombed and thereafter levelled.

tion, made in 2001 by the use of sophisticated software, appears to many as a Disney-like architecture, blatantly false and of questionable taste in its forced historicism. Towering over this building – headquarters of the media group Bertelsmann, which financed the reconstruction and whose motto is “openness, transparency, and innovative power” – are the terracotta martial eagles of ancient Prussia.

Further, the faithful reconstruction of the Fridericianum Forum, the ensemble of historical buildings – which, according to Emperor Frederik II's design, were to become the beating heart of Prussian power – was of major importance to Berlin's Land. In the current Bebelplatz, where the famous book bonfire took place in 1933, the ancient Pergola, the green area where ministers of the Reich sunbathed, was revived in 2008 on the basis of paintings of the time.

There are many other GDR buildings that in the last 10 years have been destroyed or radically changed.<sup>20</sup> The old ministries, embassies, and institutional buildings on Unter den Linden were subjected to drastic interventions, which changed connotations often in a rather spurious manner, and were covered with symbolically neutral facades. On the other hand, the most important case of conservation of the socialist urban inheritance in the city centre, perhaps the last residue of the Ostberliner's old homeland, is the ex-Staatsratsgebäude, site of the GDR's State Council, built in 1964 on Marx-Engel-Platz (previously Schlossplatz). The building is the product of a composition that is as striking as meaningful: a large, Bauhaus style parallelepiped, into the centre of which was inserted the original Baroque balcony of the Hohenzollern castle from which Karl Liebknecht on November 9, 1918 declared the birth of the socialist republic. Today this political emblem is, ironically, the site of a private university of marketing and management.

Another eloquent example of repurposing is the imposing *Haus der Einheit* on the Torstraße, built in 1920-style *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which during the GDR became the party headquarters and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Purchased by English investors, since 2010 it has hosted the Soho House Berlin, a luxurious wellness centre with exclusive private

20. There are also other examples in Mitte worth citing: the demolition of the Palasthotel and the Ahornblatt, the self-service restaurant Ahornblatt, a modern architectural jewel substituted by an anonymous hotel; the rebuilding of the Hungarian Embassy and the Adlon Hotel; the new facades of the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Commerce. In other eastern districts the demolitions of public or residential GDR buildings, which were often very beloved, were countless, as were the timely protest demonstrations.

clubs, dedicated to the trendy rich transferred from all over Europe to the reunified city.

In this context, we should at least mention the urban guidelines known as “Planwerk,” which Senator Hans Stimmann began promoting back in 1999, with the aim of organically integrating the two divided parts of the city. The Planwerk Innenstadt regarding the centre actually provides for a “critical reconstruction” principle oriented toward enhancing Berlin’s “historical” layout and “local” architectural typologies. The *kritische Rekonstruktion*, as we have seen, took on the role of clear “Prussification” of Mitte, a type of “imaginative re-living and performative reproduction of history.”<sup>21</sup> The “degradation of the East,” underlying this widespread recovery operation perceived as “reactionary” and “primitive,” seems overt to many of those interviewed, as does the attempt to reconnect to a pre-GDR age and the positive “legends of foundation” of the new German Federal Republic: Deutsches Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic. If nostalgia for the architecture that pre-dates the devastating bombings of 1945 can seem comprehensible, it is significant that the restorative criteria which turns the clock back 100 years be chosen, bringing Prussian splendour back to life: the grandeur of a Germany as yet unblemished by Nazi shame or the blunders of state socialism. A kind of wiping clean the slate, which in the eyes of new generations will erase the visible signs of the 20th Century from the centre of Berlin and the urban memory.<sup>22</sup> Resurrecting *ex novo* from the old, the Mitte neighbourhood intends to offer to the new Germans an ensemble of temporal space, signs, and relationships that represent a fulcrum of identification and recognition. In the meantime, renewed places of memory, rituals and calendars lend themselves to becoming the foundation of the new national community.

21. A. Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 2007), p. 154.

22. This research points out that not only the perception of change is transitional, but even the memory of the past itself, if not revived also by the evidence embedded in the stones, is destined to fade. For example, when the term “prussification” is mentioned to the interviewees, the majority of them refer almost exclusively to the Hohenzollern Castle; only rarely are they able to name any of the many other cases of historicist reconstruction not covered by the media. Something different occurs in the case of demolition of buildings, which tends to stick in the memory not only because a space that one had gotten used to was radically changed, but also because of the symbolic and semantic meaning of the absence.

## 2. Topolatry: Dis-appropriated and re-appropriated areas

Prior to that fateful 1989, the GDR's intense propaganda had been unable to instill a strong sense of national identity in its own citizens unless based on a reification of values contrary to those of the west presented as corrupt or deviant: an oppositional identity, based on *non*-capitalism, *non*-consumerism, and *non*-imperialism. And despite state efforts, the places of remembrance as the foundational patrimony of a community did not have an effect at a national level, but rather at the level of each individual's personal experience. It was only with the fall of that world – and the sudden emptying of meaning of an entire existence – that many East Germans were led to re-evaluate those architectural or monumental spaces to which previously they made no particular reference. A posthumous attribution of meaning which transposed itself little by little from intimately individual to collective. That community which, when it was alive struggled to affirm itself, now paradoxically began to define itself precisely by its own ashes. Even the protests of the Ostberliners against the erasing of the socialist traces did not originate from a national or ideological fondness for those spaces, but rather from a resentful defence of shared experience.

The entrustment of identity to places – well represented by the word “topolatry” – originates in the need to appeal to a final resource able to counter a sudden deprivation of sense.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, more than a nostalgic melancholy, this is about a survival strategy. Due to the continuous changes to the face of the city, the Berliners from the east resigned to attributing the mediation of their own experiences in the GDR to physical places, different each time, patiently moving the *topos* holding their biography. Near the “lost” areas, on the other hand, there are also places that have been symbolically re-appropriated or dis-appropriated, loaded with new meanings produced by other influxes and minorities. Three examples help explicate this concept.

23. Topolatry – literally “worship (cult) of a place” – has a double etymological valence: in ancient Greek *latría* means “cult,” and relates to the Latin *colere*, entailing care and protection; but *latría* reveals also the etymology of *lâtris*, “slave”, which implies a sort of subjugation to a place as a means for residual identification and a last resource of rooting. Topolatry can thus be interpreted as a devoted and unconditional entrustment of one's life experiences to a physical space. The term was recorded and defined as «Worship of, or excessive reverence for, a place» in the second edition of the *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1954).

The first comes from the *Plattenbauten*, the ordinal pre-fabricated buildings, protagonists of the communist view of the city. In East Berlin, the “Platten” made up 60% of the buildings built from the end of the Second World War to the fall of the Wall, as in the neighbourhoods of Lichtenberg and Marzahn-Hellersdorf. This type of flat was very popular because it had all the comforts of a modern home, unlike the old, un-refurbished buildings (*Altbau*) in the centre, which often had no running water. The new residential quarters, flagships of SED policies, were the unmistakable destination of the party’s foreign delegations, but with the reunification and the progressive re-modeling of the houses in the centre they became, in their grey uniformity, symbols of the GDR’s monotony. Despite massive structural and aesthetic interventions, the prefabricated residences are now associated with a stream of skyscrapers of unpleasant socialist imprint. Further, the economic and demographic problems of the 1990s contributed to the emptying out of entire *Plattenbauten*. Currently, these residential neighbourhoods are marred by unemployment, social distress, political extremism, and the difficult integration of migrants – especially those from the former Soviet Bloc.<sup>24</sup> There is little attraction to such districts and housing typologies even among many East Berliners, to the degree that, even those who declare themselves fortunate to have grown up in these neighbourhoods, would not go back to live there today.

Another example of hybrid urban memory is Alexanderplatz, an area radically transformed by various influxes (if not opposite of those pre-1989), which, however, still maintains a familiar and, in a certain sense, representative character for the East German minority. Despite the name, Alexanderplatz does not seem like a square, but more like an unstructured area devoid of a midpoint, marked by numerous nerve centres with a clear GDR imprint. One of these is the famous television tower, affectionately called “Alex,” which, at 368 meters high, was intended to represent socialism’s ability not only in construction.<sup>25</sup> There are, however, also structures

24. In 2003 in Marzahn-Hellersdorf alone 13% of the 100,000 prefabricated buildings were unoccupied. “If you want to live in Marzahn, you should either be able to speak Russian fluently or run fast.” in A. Bartali, T. Masi, *Berlino. Guide Clup* (Novara: De Agostini, 2005), p. 306.

25. When the sunlight strikes the steel sphere below the antenna, a cross-shaped reflection forms, which was called ironically “the Pope’s revenge,” referring to the atheist policies of the old republic. At that time there were also those who interpreted it not as a cross but as a plus sign for socialism.

of clear East German memory, even though now covered with signs of multi-national chains: a 37-floor hotel, the Teacher's House and the building of the electronics industry, the conference centre and the commercial Warenhaus, the travel agency which, despite minimal business, occupied a 17-floor building, and, last but not least, the famous Urania clock which, by indicating the time in various countries around the world, alluded to the GDR's "internationalism."<sup>26</sup> The party demonstrations were also permanently tied to the East-German version of Red Square, which in 1989 became protests against the regime. Now the glitzy lights, imposing shopping centres, multinational services and swarms of tourists are the clear expression of a triumphant capitalism; but, nevertheless, Alexanderplatz continues to represent a concentrated exhibition of the strength of "Berlin, capital of the GDR," geographic and symbolic point at which the metropolitan east begins. This space – in which, as Alfred Döblin describes in his masterpiece, the spiteful wind continues to blow – still flaunts what through the years has become the emblem of the old republic: grey. The depersonalizing colour of the plaster, which was replaced almost everywhere else by fresh, vibrant paint, is not only easy to find here, but has become an integral part of the square itself. And this complexion reminds the native easterners' noses of the acrid smell from the mufflers of the Trabants. These implicit connotations are the reason that Alexanderplatz – despite the apparent anonymity of the place and the inevitable western conquests – remains a meeting point *of and for* the East still today.

The last, brief example to mention is the architecture tied to East Berliners *par excellence*, even though as an external element of identification: the Berlin Wall. The 156 kilometres of three-meter-high cement were the "necessary" survival measure for the socialist republic, which brought an end to the continuous flight of citizens and the rapid haemorrhaging of the economy. The desolated border strip, the patch of land in the heart of the city, was the demonstration of how "the void, the nothingness" would "function with more efficiency, subtlety, and flexibility than any object you could imagine in its place."<sup>27</sup> Following November 9, 1989, the instinctive desire for normalcy that permeated a city tested by continuous states of

26. On November 9, 1989 the famous banner "Wir sind das Volk." (We are the People) appeared on the main facade of the "Haus des Lehrers," then in 1999, the provocative "Wir waren das Volk." (We were the People).

27. R. Koolhaas, B. Mau, *S, M, L, XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), p. 228.

emergency ended up almost entirely erasing the “border of shame.” Only a few kilometres and five of the 302 guard towers of the long cement wound remain. As time passes, however, the most obvious Berlin absentee became ever more noticeable: next to the proclaimed “need for memory,” there was actually a pressing request from disappointed tour operators and visitors for missing traces of the city’s symbol. Therefore, at the turn of the century, generous public funding has rendered that fracture more visible. With much effort the German capital is transforming itself into a great *mnemo-topos* of the Wall, destined to activate the memory of the division and the dark past of the GDR, confirming, in contrast, the sound democratic principles of the present. It is not surprising to notice, therefore, how the Wall itself, together with the Stasi buildings and the memorials of repression, is the only architectural remnant of the GDR to be deliberately preserved as such in the new Berlin.

If, at a neurological level, every experiential event affects the brain by leaving traces on it called “engrams,”<sup>28</sup> a similar mark may also be read in the urban space of the German capital, where various pasts represent a tormented narrative landscape. In the East this text – at times silent, at times screaming – is increasingly losing its *memorative* ability, of which East Berliners were privileged recipients, while acquiring an *informative* one, strictly determined by the logic of the groups in power.

### 3. Social influence and access to economic resources

Let’s consider now a few social-economic characteristics of this particular minority by first outlining some brief generalities. Immediately following the fall of the Wall, the direct passage to free market enterprise brought on a dizzying economic and employment crisis in East Germany. The first free elections on March 18, 1990 – marking Germany’s quick unification process<sup>29</sup> – gave way to an unprecedented, lightning-fast mass-

28. In 1908 biologist Richard Semon (1859-1918) introduced the concept of “engramma” as a mnemonic trace, which every experience produces on the cerebral level. Philosopher Aby Warburg successfully used this concept, translating it from the neurological field into the socio-cultural one.

29. Habermas defined the accelerated unification of the two German states as an “administrative procedure oriented to economic imperatives” and devoid of a “democratic dynamic.” J. Habermas, *Vergangenheit als Zukunft* (Zürich: Pendo Verlag, 1991), p. 57.



privatisation involving more than 8,500 GDR enterprises with over 4 million employees that de-industrialized *de facto* the territory of the East. The overly rapid monetary unification at a one-to-one exchange rate brought on a quadrupling of production costs for East German companies, which ended up losing their market share and went bankrupt.<sup>30</sup> But the drastic “dismantling policy” (*Abwicklungspolitik*) was mainly characterised by the work of the infamous “Treuhand,”<sup>31</sup> the Government Trustee charged with managing the privatisation and liquidation of the GDR’s publically owned enterprises. Even the companies that had enough capital for the new economy and managed to convert their production were sold off dramatically below cost or given to unscrupulous speculators without the necessary controls.<sup>32</sup> This disastrous management – deemed criminal by many – of GDR’s production sector, localized also in Berlin, incurred a loss of €870 billion, almost half of the total cost of the German unification.<sup>33</sup> The effects of what has been judged an enormous “state scam” without accountability<sup>34</sup> helped to radicalise the social and psychological divide between citizens of East and West, and even now still drains the country’s economy.

Without getting into the specifics of a complex and still, in certain ways, obscure affair, what should be emphasized here is that East Germans were ousted from the productive capital of the ex-GDR, i.e. from their native soil, for the advantage of western businessmen. The results of a survey

30. The monetary and social reform, which came into effect on 1 July 1990, established the exchange of 1 GDR-Mark for 1 Deutsche Mark. The 1:1 exchange was applied to salaries, pensions, and rents, while personal estates were subject partly to 1:1, partly to 2:1, depending on the capital amount and on the citizen’s age.

31. About the Treuhand see D. Grosser, “Treuhandanstalt” in W. Andersen, W. Woyke, ed., *Handwörterbuch des politischen Systems der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2003) and “Beutezug Ost. Die Treuhand und die Abwicklung der DDR,” video documentation by H. Klar and U. Stoll, Frontal21, ZDF, 2010.

32. The case of Wärmeanlagebau WBB of Berlin, the GDR’s most competitive energy sector, is just one example. In spite of a €2 billion capital, this company was sold for a minimal fraction of its value to a western businessman, who in just few months encumbered it with debts and let it go bankrupt.

33. N.a. “Die deutsche Einheit kostete 1,6 Billionen Euro,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 194 (2009), p. 12. The German “1,6 Billionen Euro” means 1.6 trillion.

34. There are still no accountable parties to “the biggest fraud of German economic history” (W. Schulz), due to a special law, which exempted Treuhand’s executives from being charged with wrongful oversight and mismanagement. Special committees on the crimes of unification (ZERV) were established in order to shed light on the issues.

by *Süddeutsche Zeitung*<sup>35</sup> are significant, according to which three-fourths of East Germans feel like “second class citizens” to this day.<sup>36</sup> The reason this is not just a perception is shown by statistical data pertaining to ex-GDR territory, in which the unemployment rate is double compared to that of the West; salaries and pensions are respectively 17% and 12% lower; and the wealth is barely one-third compared to that of the former West Germany.<sup>37</sup> And again: West Germans occupy 95% of the decision-making positions in the country and, even in the East, 70% of the local leadership is from the West.<sup>38</sup> Further, all judges of the Federal Constitutional Court are *Westdeutsche*, as are 95% of the professors of Humanities in German universities. Only the Army proves to be a sure employment sector for the new eastern generations, who represent 60% of the German soldiers on missions abroad – a proportion, however, that is not maintained among the top military echelons which count barely 1% of *Ostdeutsche*. For East Germans a top position is just as difficult to reach as it is for women and immigrants, so much so that, after two decades of German-German coexistence, there is a word – *Überschichtung* – the hyper-occupation of leadership by *Westdeutsche*, which captures the degree of social exclusion.

Another problem in East Germany is represented by the demographic collapse (from 1990 to 2008 the birth rate decreased by 38%) and by transfers to the West, with 2,7 million *Ostdeutsche* choosing “internal migration” to western Länder.<sup>39</sup> However, in Berlin it is rare for citizens from the East to transfer to the western part of the city, still considered foreign

35. See C. Cadenbach, B. Obermayer, “Die Ostdeutschen,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin*, 30 (July 30, 2010), pp. 12-19; also the statistics cited below, if not otherwise mentioned. Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, 20 Jahre Deutsche Einheit, Wiesbaden, 2010, available at: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/StatistischesJahrbuch/DeutscheEinheit.html>.

36. For the sake of accuracy, a quarter of former West Germans consider East Germany to be the land of second-class citizens.

37. Even considering the more affordable life in East Germany, a wage gap of almost 10% still exists (2012). Minimum wage in the East is about €3 less per hour than that of the West. One of my informants sarcastically explained the difference in retirement income in this way: “I am punished with a lower pension than in the West because I come from the *democratic* part of Germany!” Moritz M., 88 years old.

38. Considering an East German population of almost 95%. These data keep relevance even if two remarkable exceptions are considered: currently (2012) the Chancellor and the Federal President are East German (it is not a coincidence that both belonged to the opposition movement in the GDR).

39. See Statistisches Bundesamt, 20 Jahre Deutsche Einheit, Wiesbaden, 2010, pp. 13-14.



Image 6. "Yuppisation is Apartheid," anti-gentrification movement in Prenzlauer Berg, 2009.

territory.<sup>40</sup> There are, nevertheless, largely eastern neighbourhoods that are subject to massive gentrification by western investors, often foreigners, attracted by housing prices that are lower than the European standard and who, by raising rents, force old tenants to move elsewhere. There are numerous "anti-yuppisation" movements countering construction speculation and the worrisome explosion of the real-estate market, in order to defend the city from "wealthy colonizers" in the form of seasonal Berliners and tourists – often the targets of resentment and distrust.<sup>41</sup> While many West Berliners have, in the meantime, been able to buy a flat, East Berliners – still unused

40. Also shown in interviews conducted during my research. In the same way only rarely does a West Berliner decide to move to the city's east side.

41. This problem can be found in the columns of the capital's newspapers almost every day. There are also many Italians who, even though not residents in the city, have bought flats in Berlin, attracted by convenient prices. Prenzlauer Berg, in particular, has become the symbol of the West German conquest of the East, so much so that the neighbourhood close to Kollwitzplatz is known as "the Swabia." Countless interviewees complain about unbearable rents.

to the concept of private ownership and borrowing – are often left out of the competition and lose the chance to invest in reasonably priced property.

The difference in wages and, to a certain extent, pensions between East and West Berlin is surely less striking than that between the old and new federal regions given that the same laws now apply throughout the Bundesland. However, there are many structural differences between the two worlds which render East Berliners distinct even today, reinforcing the many examples of virtual walls criss-crossing the city – from different electoral behaviour via media and newspaper consumption to a value system tempered by the old republic.<sup>42</sup> In this regard, we should also mention the different image of women between East and West and the few mixed marriages between *Ostdeutsche* and *Westdeutsche* (estimated to be only 4% in 2009).<sup>43</sup>

If the East-West differences are an appreciable generational variation, it is just as true that even among young people born after 1989 – currently nearly a quarter of the population of the new Bundesländer – the cultural peculiarities of the East, thanks to the influence of relatives, tend to still be pronounced. The interviews conducted proved that even the younger *Nachwendekinder*, who grew up in multi-cultural Berlin, share certain precise cultural peculiarities.

#### 4. *Hands on the past: Public discourse and public ineffability*

The most incisive and controversial factor rendering those Berliners who were socialised in the GDR a contractually weaker minority is their actual exclusion from the public discussion regarding their old homeland. In analysing the various institutional and private mechanisms of selection and organization of images of the Democratic Republic, my research confirms how the gradual decrease in testimony by contemporary witnesses is reciprocated by an increase in studies and researches on the GDR, together with public and media debates, cultural initiatives and museum exhibitions, focused to a large degree on the repressive and criminal aspects of the SED regime. Even *Ostalgie*, “Nostalgia for the East,” the commercial

42. For these aspects see L. Candidi, *La repubblica contesa: scontri e confronti di memorie*, in M. Martini, T. Schaarschmidt, eds. *Riflessioni sulla DDR Prospettive internazionali e interdisciplinari vent'anni dopo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), pp. 309-21. See also L. Candidi, *Spazi di memoria nella Berlino post-socialista* (Milano: Mimesis 2012).

43. Cadenbach, Obermayer, “Die Ostdeutschen,” p. 34.

media phenomenon, proved ineffective in diversifying the current official memory panorama.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, discourses on socialist Germany outside of the totalitarian paradigm find no access in the public portrayals of that past – which has become a source of ill-concealed resentment among the East German population.

The thinly veiled insinuations that East Germans lived a dictatorship's "ideological falsehood," in a "failed social experiment," are perceived by many ex-citizens of the GDR as denigration of their identity and their life experience.<sup>45</sup> The exclusion from the public memory of those witnesses who were *not* victims of the state socialist regime makes up the background of the nostalgic phenomenon and constitutes a contributing cause of political attitudes of protest. Major influences in this regard are not only the economic problems but an awareness, especially for those now middle-aged, of having "lived in vain" since their own experience and knowledge found no echo in the process of national growth. In the survey, many of those interviewed claim the existence of a *different* GDR, denying the historical portrayal focused exclusively on negative aspects.

Furthermore, it is worth emphasising here that certain memories of the GDR, while they may vary from person to person, take on a shared recurrence and condense into a type of collective *topoi*. For example, positive values associated with the GDR – "no unemployment," "safety," "reciprocal trust and solidarity," "more value for women," "free day-care," "nominal rents" – are mentioned in the same order by both men and women between the ages of 41 and 60 years old, the cohort of those who, in deliberately provocative terminology, are known as "Wendegewinner" and "Wendeverlierer," the "winners" and the "losers" of the 1989/1990 turning point.<sup>46</sup> It is precisely on the basis of these "places" of remembrance, on their self-attribution and perpetuation, and their transmission

44. With frivolous shows and gadgets of doubtful taste the *Ostalgie* was trying to bring colour back to a GDR, which had been turned a uniform gray. This controversial fashion – developed by Western entrepreneurs and perceived by many East Germans as simple mockery, if not exploitation, of their own past – succeeded in inhibiting the development of different perspectives and analysis about the GDR's socio-cultural life, relegating every positive memory of the old republic to the general suspicion of nostalgic conservatism.

45. When an equivalency (*Gleichstellung*) rather than just a comparison (*Vergleich*) of the GDR with the Nazi regime is discussed, the already difficult dialogue with older East Germans inevitably fails since many of them stood for the GDR precisely because it declared itself an anti-fascist state.

46. For a detailed description of these dynamics see L. Candidi, *Spazi di memoria*.



Image 7. “Born in the DDR”, Pankow, Summer 2010.

to younger generations, that the specific identity of East Berliners consolidates itself.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, it is interesting to note how the evocation of the positive aspects occurs almost exclusively between those who lived that specific past, and is not shared in the presence of outsiders who “can’t understand” or who would fire accusations of conservatism or nostalgia. The margins of *public ineffability* of the past are defined in this sense. Therefore, there are at least two types of images of the GDR which coexist in parallel: one within the group, a kind of remembrance community

47. The memories of the old Heimat are undoubtedly influenced by individual factors, such as generational perspective, current socio-economical conditions, and personal experience. However, as many studies on autobiographical memory point out, the “rehearsal” phenomenon – repetition of a reduced number of past events, confirmed by a cultural frame of reference – plays a very important part in the recollection of memories. See among others M. Conway, *Autobiographical Memory: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990).



which share past experiences or stories about experiences; and the other, official and institutional, perceived by those directly affected as hostile and unfamiliar.

With regard to the memories of the minority, it may be useful to return to a reflection on the concept of “cognitive dissonance,” borrowed from social psychology. According to this notion, there are two possible ways to lessen the contradiction (dissonance) between the individual world and the external one, a contradiction that often provokes frustration and isolation: one can either induce a change in the environment by varying his/her behaviour or modify the system of his/her own cognitive representations.<sup>48</sup> If a few elements of this model are applied to the current case study, we can map a possible future trend. When someone enjoys positive memories of the GDR – or, at least, not completely negative ones – but is surrounded by contrasting interpretations, s/he eventually avoids summoning those memories beyond a familiar and well-known context. Since we are all bombarded with negative information about the GDR – in the urban fabric, history books, schools, museums and by the media – such a person suffers the contradictions and, unable to produce a change in the environment, tends to slowly conform his/her cognitive world to the prevailing external representations. Long-term, dissonant, external frameworks inhibit a contrasting or critical attitude. Conversely, the person harbouring especially negative memories of the GDR and rejecting that past, does not have to make any cognitive effort to adapt his/her world to the external representations. Such a person does not experience contradictions, placed as s/he is in the prevalent mnemonic flow of the society.

Nearly a quarter of a century after the German reunification, the minority we have considered here proves to be a silent witness, yet still able to speak. According to Halbwachs, its memory can be interpreted as a still-active residue of the GDR's old *social frames*, which are rejected by the *cadres* of the new society. This minority has a surviving, destabilizing memory (Gérard Namer would call it “negative memory”), characterised by a temporary resistance to adaptation, and is therefore opposed – a memory condemned to remain publicly deactivated for the present time and to disappear gradually.

48. See L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1957).



### 5. *A new “Anschluß”?*

These examples show how East Berliners have been deprived of the right to recognize their own past in the urban context and to affirm it in public memory like their West Berliner fellow citizens. On a reduced yet representative scale, in an area of barely 900 sq. km, Berlin has been the scene of what has been provocatively called the *Anschluß* of East German territories – a sudden and radical “annexation” unparalleled in the former Soviet Bloc – coupled with an attempt at assimilation, more than integration, of the eastern minority: a minority sacrificed to the policies of legitimization of a new nation, which firmly holds interpretative sovereignty over the past.

PIETRO CINGOLANI

## Near or Far: Daily Life, Migration, and Symbolic Boundaries Between Roma and *gagè* in Romania

The Roma are currently one of the most stigmatised social groups in Romania. They gained visibility in the media and national and international public debate immediately after the fall of the socialist regime. Their status as a national minority was never recognised by the socialist regime, in accordance with a clear policy aimed at total cultural and ethnic assimilation.<sup>1</sup> They obtained their status as a minority for the first time in Romanian history in the early 1990s, when the issue went beyond national boundaries and became the object, at the international level, of different representations, ranging from victimisation to rejection.<sup>2</sup>

Today the Roma constitute one of the main minority groups in Romania, and Romania is the European country in which they have the largest presence. According to the 2002 census there were 535,140 Roma, or 2.5% of the total population, the second-largest minority after Hungarians. Roma NGOs propose figures ranging between 2.5 and 3 million people, almost 10% of the population of Romania. Combining data obtained through self-identification, the national census, and data obtained through hetero-identification, we can estimate a presence equal to 5% of the total population.<sup>3</sup> From the 1990s on, in addition recognition as a national minority, the Roma have achieved representation in parliament, the right to self-identification in censuses, and political protection of their language and

1. V. Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest: Ceu Press, 2004).

2. L. Fozsto, M. Anăstăsoaie, "Romania: representations, public policies and political projects," in W. Guy, ed., *Between Past and Future. The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), pp. 351-69.

3. C. Zamfir, E. Zamfir, *Țigani: între ignorare și îngrijorare* (Bucharest: Editura Alternativa, 1993).

culture. The number of Roma NGOs has grown and Roma groups have become, in the course of preparation for entry into the European Union, one of the most important objectives of community development programs. Despite their increasingly leading role in the Romanian public arena, several studies have shown that the Roma have paid the biggest price in the process of transformation from a real socialist system to economic and political neo-liberalism.<sup>4</sup> In many cases, they have even been identified by the population as primarily responsible for the problems that destabilised the country in the early 1990s, such as inflation and real estate speculation.<sup>5</sup> However, the outcomes connected to the exit process from socialism are not unambiguous and it would be superficial to speak of a single fate of the Roma in Romania today. There are important regional differences, ranging from metropolitan areas where we observe the worst forms of exclusion and ghettoization, to intermediate areas in which the Roma have managed to maintain a decent standard of living, not so different from the rest of the population.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, as has been highlighted by various researchers,<sup>7</sup> the social boundaries between Roma and non-Roma are not rigid, but are constantly negotiated by social actors according to different contexts of interaction and opportunity: in some contexts the Roma emphasise their total difference from majority groups; in others the difference loses value and the Roma perceive themselves as quite similar to the *gagè*.<sup>8</sup> The non-Roma have often brought about, in Romania as elsewhere in Europe, a distancing from and homogenisation of the internal differences within the Roma world. Anthropologist Leonardo Piasere notes that the term “gypsy” refers to a polythetic category, a category that does not have enough traits to allow a clear individuation. “Gypsy” is a term historically used throughout

4. R. Emigh, I. Szelenyi, ed., *Poverty, Ethnicity, and Gender in Eastern Europe During the Market Transition* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); A. Revenga, D. Ringold, W. M. Tracy, *Poverty and Ethnicity: A Cross-Country Study of Roma Poverty in Central Europe* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2002).

5. K. Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

6. K. Tamás, F. László, F. Gábor, eds., *Incluziune și excluziune. Studii de caz asupra comunităților de romi din România* (Cluj-Napoca: Kriterion, 2009).

7. A. Engerbringsten, *Exploring Gypsiness: Power, Exchange and Interdependence in a Transylvanian Village* (Oxford: Bergham, 2007).

8. In this essay I use the term “*gagè*,” which in the Romany language indicates all people who are not Roma.

modern Europe to denote a variety of people, even those with considerable cultural diversity, whose only common feature consists of a stigma applied by those who do not consider themselves gypsies.<sup>9</sup>

To understand the relations between Roma and *gagè* in contemporary Romania it is important to consider the phenomenon of international migration, a phenomenon that produced complex transnational social fields that cross Europe. Studies devoted to the Roma minority in Romania to date have rarely adopted a transnational perspective, and have focused more on relationships with the majority populations in a single territory without linking those relationships to migration.

Migration abroad has modified, in part, the ability to access resources and changed the balance of power, generating among both the Roma and the *gagè* complex representative rhetoric and discourses about the other. To understand these mechanisms it is, therefore, important to relate the supranational dimension to the national and local levels. Moreover, relations between Roma and *gagè* take place in a specific space, and it is essential to study the ways in which people can appropriate these spaces. One can observe a continuous dialectic between the material forces that produce the space and individual and group projects that transform it.<sup>10</sup>

The space analysed in this paper consists of some villages and towns in south-western Romania, located in the mountainous region of Banat, on the border with Serbia. It is a largely agricultural region, where many of the Roma who live in Italy and in the city of Turin are from.<sup>11</sup> These locations were the centre of a thriving economic area, which experienced a dramatic decline with the end of the regime. Analyses of social practices and representations are, therefore, related to more general social and economic change in the landscape: the impoverished countryside, urban centres which have lost their power of attraction because they are emptied of productive potential and have not found a new economic role, aging population, falling birth rates, and continued population decline. The analysis

9. L. Piasere, *I rom d'Europa. Una storia moderna* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2004), p. 3.

10. M. de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980); F. La Cecla, *Perdersi, l'uomo senza ambiente* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1988).

11. The research was conducted in the localities of Răcășdia, Vraniuț, Oravita, and Ticvaniu Mare. Răcășdia and Vraniuț contain 1,400 and 777 inhabitants respectively, of whom 423 were declared to be of Roma origin in the last census (20%). In Oravita, with a population of 12,355 inhabitants, 2,100 are Roma (17%); Ticvaniu Mare has a population of 2,000 inhabitants, of whom 600 said they are Roma (30%).

incorporates the socialist period through the years immediately following 1989, and then focuses on the current period, to which most of this work is dedicated.

### 1. *The position of the Roma during socialism*

The development of the Banat Mountains region was tied to the richness and variety of the natural resources, whose exploitation during the socialist period, transformed the area into one of the most prosperous in Romania. In this area every family had an average of 5 hectares of land and this abundant, fertile, agricultural land was nationalised in 1961 through the agricultural production cooperatives (CAP) and state agricultural enterprises (IAS).<sup>12</sup>

Modernisation in agriculture involved the creation of new infrastructure: workshops for the maintenance of agricultural machinery, renewal of the local railway line, and the establishment of stores for the concentration and sorting of agricultural products. In addition to the development of agriculture resources, the regime invested in the construction of large, industrial public works projects like the Crivina power station that, in Ceaușescu's plans, was to provide energy for the whole region. Between 1983 and 1988, 4,000 men worked on the construction. The mining sector also experienced great growth. There were many coal, zinc, and gold mines in the region. In 1954, the largest uranium mine in Romania was opened which, during the period of maximum activity, employed 20,000 miners and led to the extraction of 300,000 tonnes of uranium.<sup>13</sup>

All these factors attracted a large number of internal migrants, mainly from Moldova, one of the poorest regions of Romania since the 1960s. There was employment for unskilled labourers, workers, and farm la-

12. For comparison, in Moldova, in the district of Suceava, every family had an average of half a hectare of land. P. Cingolani, *Romeni d'Italia. Migrazioni, vita quotidiana e legami transnazionali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

13. A mining area similar in size can be found in the Lupeni, Vulcan and Petroșani coal mines in the Jiu River Valley, in the neighbouring district of Hunedoara. This area has become famous for *mineriadi*, violent protests by unions and workers who organised into two factions in Bucharest in 1990 and 1999. For the dramatic social transformations of these territories, please refer to D. Kideckel, *Getting By in Postsocialist Romania: Labor, the Body, and Working-Class Culture* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008).

bourers, but also intellectuals, professors, engineers, and doctors. Mr. Ilie worked in the mines for 28 years from the age of 15:

In my opinion, in the Ciudanivita mine, 70% of workers were Moldovans. In Moldova there were 12 children per family and nothing to eat so no one was afraid to work in the mines. Those of Banat had rather small families with two children and so much land. On my team there were three Moldovans, they have not looked back; they moved in with their family and they bought a house here and stayed. The gypsies sometimes did not have a job, very few worked in the mines, for them work was like an iron chain for the dog. Most of them were doing work in the countryside.<sup>14</sup>

During the years of socialism, as evidenced by Mr. Ilie, the Roma were primarily employed in agricultural work. Although Romanians tended to attribute the under-representation of Roma in the mines to a different work ethic and sense of responsibility (“for them work was like an iron chain for the dog”), in reality the different position in the socialist labour market was linked to other factors: in particular, for a majority of Roma, the lack of required professional qualifications. Many Roma men were employed in agricultural cooperatives as unskilled labourers. Some were tractor drivers, others were in charge of cleaning the stables and taking the herds and flocks out to pasture. The possibility of dependable stable employment thus represented, for a social group who had never owned land, a partial improvement of their economic condition. The creation of a station for concentration and distribution of agricultural products also attracted a lot of Roma families from nearby villages. The men formed groups for loading and unloading goods and for this work, in addition to receiving a salary, they were rewarded with the same products. Moreover, even in the socialist period, several large landowners, whose property was not collectivised, remained for whom the availability of a flexible, low-cost labour force was essential. From the early 1970s we observe local-level migratory chains from remote villages to the centres of production, and even across regions, from poorer areas to more developed areas. Many Roma women from Maramureş in northern Romania arrived as seasonal workers to pick fruit, then met and joined the Roma men from this region and remained here. Many of them were employed as domestic servants and maids in the households of the wealthy Romanians.

14. Ilie, Oravita, August 8, 2010.

Roma women and men were in a position of “asymmetric interdependence” with respect to the *gagè*.<sup>15</sup> They occupied a subordinate position, providing necessary services that the *gagè* could not find elsewhere. Mirela, a Roma woman from Vrancea, remembers well her work with Romanian families:

We gypsy women here in town would clean and cook for Romanians. And then they say that the gypsies are dirty! I’ve learned many things from Romanians, for example, to cook cakes; my grandmother just made an apple cake because among gypsies we did not have this tradition. But I’ve learned and then I started to teach other gypsies how to make cakes.<sup>16</sup>

Some Roma, a minority, occupied specific professional niches, such as horse trading or copper processing, with good earnings and a more advantageous position than the Romanians, as they were the only ones with these skills. Despite socialist mechanisation, the horses were fundamental to the rural economy and every farm family needed to buy and maintain a copper boiler to produce plum brandy. In addition to these sedentary Roma, there was a group of Roma who never settled in the territory, but who appeared seasonally in the villages: clothing and agricultural tool merchants and brick manufacturers (*cărămidari*). They were the only ones who maintained semi-nomadic customs; they moved in groups and settled at the edge of streams where there was good ground, built kilns, and produced bricks which they provided to farmers in exchange for farm products. Despite the numerous assimilationist policies pursued by local authorities, the Roma found themselves, in general, to be socially disadvantaged with regard to the majority population. As we have seen, they were assigned less-skilled work and their wages were lower than those of the general population. The majority were engaged in non-skilled and labour-intensive occupations, functional jobs in that economic system, that later were the first to disappear with the collapse of the regime.

In the socialist period the Roma in the locations studied lived in neighbourhoods with well-defined boundaries. In Vrancea, Roma families, all related to each other, lived in huts close together on either side of a dirt road in a homogeneous neighbourhood, *Țigania*, separate from the *gagè* neighbourhoods. The same was true in Răcășdia, where all the families lived

15. Engerbringsten, *Exploring Gypsiness*.

16. Mirela, Vrancea, August 2, 2009.



near the local stadium and in Ticvaniu where they were located on hills on the northern edge of the village. This residential geography reflected the mode of arrival and settlement of the first Roma families in the late nineteenth century; the Roma people worked the land for the *gagè* owners and received in exchange small plots on which to build their homes. Over the years the migratory chains led to enlargement of the initial group, which, however, had maintained its separateness from the rest of the settlements. As we shall see later, migration abroad has led to important changes in Roma residential solutions.

## *2. The years since 1989*

The years that followed the fall of the regime were marked by great uncertainty at the institutional and economic level. The first effect of the neo-liberal policies was the crisis of the entire public sector and the bankruptcy of large state enterprises. The mines dramatically reduced their number of employees until their complete closure in the late 1990s. They left scars on the land, irreversibly polluted and contaminated, and a large number of workers unemployed. The feeling of frustration among former miners of this region is very high: from membership in the working class celebrated as the backbone of the socialist regime, they became a social group unsuited to the modern production system. The tragedy for many workers, immigrants from other regions of the country, meant it was impossible to return to their native town and gain a suitable social position. In the early 1990s the mines and large state factories went into crisis and, in parallel, cross-border business activities increased.

The economic differentials between Romania and neighbouring countries have made it advantageous, for several years, to buy and sell all kinds of goods. Alcohol and cigarettes were purchased in Yugoslavia and resold in Romania; Romania exported into Yugoslavia handicraft products (shirts, lace), agricultural tools, and mechanical components looted from bankrupt state factories. These networks extended throughout the country (as far as Moldova for the purchase of textile products) and some Roma were able to take advantage of these commercial networks. With the outbreak of war in Serbia and the embargo imposed on Serbia by NATO in 1997, fuel smuggling became the largest source of revenue for local residents. Since the end of the embargo cigarette smuggling from Serbia to Romania has

occurred. The traffic of goods has always complemented the legal activities of moneychangers: first from marks and dinars to *lei*, the Romanian currency, today from euros to *lei*.

All of these occupations, which are called *bişniţă* (from the English *business*), often involve both Roma and non-Roma. The networks were cross-sectional and, more importantly, were able to survive thanks only to the collusion of law enforcement and border police. However, although these practices were not the exclusive preserve of one ethnic group, during this period of transformation, they spread the public stereotype of the immoral gypsy businessman interested only in accumulating wealth. This stereotype can be linked to the socialist productivist model, by which labour and production were celebrated and trade was demonised. It was precisely the ex-miners who had suddenly lost their social status who were the most resentful towards the Roma traders in these years.

After 1989 the process of decollectivisation in agriculture also began, which led painstakingly to the rebuilding of previous estates.<sup>17</sup> According to Law 18 of 1991 even those who had never owned land but had worked for the collective for at least five years were entitled to receive tracts of land, by request and depending on availability in the agricultural land reserve managed by the municipalities.

The Roma found themselves, for the first time in history, owners of plots of land but just as quickly resold them, making simple business transactions. The *gagè* criticised them for this (“the gypsies are unable to produce, because they were not farmers and they will never be real farmers”), even when they acted exactly the same way as many small farmers. Now no longer supported by any public investment, agricultural work became less and less profitable over the years, and most owners have chosen to rent their land to large foreign investors. In Răcăşdia, for example, a Danish businessman now manages an area of 2,000 hectares planted exclusively with corn. This ownership structure, along with an aging population active in agriculture, has put a strain on the system of values and pride of peasantry. In the summer of 2010, Mrs. Adina returned from Italy for the first time in 10 years. In addition to modernising her house, she tried to sell the

17. In the Banat this process was less complex than in other parts of Romania, because agricultural records were maintained and property acts had been recorded since the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. K. Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare. Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).



Image 1. Ionut standing on the ruins of the collective farm buildings.

25 hectares of land she had received as an inheritance from her grandfather after the regime had expropriated it. The Danish investor offered €10,000 for the entire property, a paltry sum:

We are hostages of our own land. My family was one of the richest and most respected in the country, now I do not know what to do. And I have no choice because the law here is made by the big people. The gypsies were smarter than us, because they never accumulated land.<sup>18</sup>

There are many stories like this. Mr. Marius today finds himself in an even more paradoxical situation: after trying to start a small farm, he transferred ownership to the Danish investor when pressed by debts accu-

18. Adina, Vrancea, August 20, 2010.

mulated for the purchase of seeds and machinery. Today he finds himself working on his own land as a tractor driver for the foreign entrepreneur at a salary of just over €150 per month.

In this contemporary reality the Roma survive by combining different sources of income, with a heterogeneity which has allowed them to adapt flexibly to change and which sometimes leads to social outcomes less dramatic than those observed among the *gagè*. Many Roma engage in small cross-border trading, still work seasonal jobs in the countryside, such as cleaning up after threshing, and enjoy meagre public assistance in exchange for community service. The Roma are not solely dependent on the natural environment, but rather on the social environment “their subsistence largely depends on their capacity to provide specific services in exchange for goods”.<sup>19</sup> Migration abroad and especially to Italy has helped to redefine the position of Roma in relation to the *gagè*.

### 3. *Migration to Italy*

The Roma in this area were the first to leave for foreign countries in the late 1990s.<sup>20</sup> After 1989 international mobility began to be noted, first to Germany, and then to France and, in some sporadic cases, to the countries of Northern Europe. These experiences, however, were unstructured and involved few people. The Roma of the region possessed migration know-how and mobility skills, which were undoubtedly greater than their *gagè* countrymen. In the 1990s many Romanians in Banat did not migrate because they were tied to the land or because they were still employed in the mines.

Mr. Radu is considered by the Roma of Răcășdia one of the pioneers of migration to Italy; as early as the 1980s, after working for years in the city collecting glass bottles, he left for Serbia, and then arrived as a political refugee in Italy. From Italy he went to Germany where he started a business exporting watches, bracelets, and other items to Romania. When

19. L. Piasere, “In Search of New Niches: the Productive Organization of the Peripatetic Xoroxanè in Italy,” in A. Rao, ed., *The Other Nomads* (Cologne-Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1987).

20. In other parts of Romania, especially in eastern regions, the first to migrate were the *gagè*. See Cingolani, *Romeni d'Italia*.

the revolution came Radu was in Belgium. In the early 1990s he remained in Germany as an asylum-seeker, then moved to Turin in 2000 and stayed there for eight years.

I have always travelled; I've never been stopped. We gypsies have more courage; we leave; we face risks, we have it in our blood. When I arrived in Turin I slept in a car, then I built a cabin near the car. Three compatriots arrived from Răcășdia and I kept them with me, then I brought my family who had remained in Romania up to that time. Then we gypsies could be counted on your fingers, we were five, then close to us there were another fifteen Romanians from Moldova. They had a different accent from ours, it was clear that they were not of us.<sup>21</sup>

In the first period the Roma men left to explore new territory; the women and children joined them later. When social networks were established, entire families (father, mother and children) began to leave.<sup>22</sup> Women never migrate by themselves. In their comments the Roma note this clear difference with respect to the *gagè*, seeing themselves as morally superior. Among the Roma the couple is considered a unit of complementary parts in which the tasks are negotiated between the man and the woman. A major concern of the man is control of his partner, so he and his family acquire and maintain honour, while the woman, aware of this male dependence, uses it to exercise her own public voice outside the domestic group.<sup>23</sup> The departure of Roma women alone would bring disgrace on the entire family group.

We do not ever let a woman leave alone. If she is married, she has to go with her husband or join him abroad; if she is not yet married, she should stay with her family. It is a question of honour. Among us it is not like among the *gagè*. Now Romanian women go to Italy alone, young and old, and no one controls them.<sup>24</sup>

21. Radu, Răcășdia, July 16, 2009.

22. In other cases, such as the Roma *cortorari* studied by Tesar, only adults migrate seasonally, leaving children at home in Romania; Italy is a place to accumulate resources through charity and bringing children would limit this strategy. C. Tesar, "Tigan bun traditional in Romania, cersetor de-etnicizat in strainatate. Politici ale re-prezentarii publice si etica muncii la romii Cortorari," in S. Toma, L. Foszto, eds., *Spectrum. Cercetari sociale despre rom* (Cluj Napoca: ISPMN - Kriterion, 2011), pp. 281-313.

23. M. Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

24. Nica, Răcășdia, July 15, 2009.



Image 2. A Roma domestic interior. A picture of an Italian wedding

The majority of Roma from this region today are in Italian cities, especially Turin and Genoa. After the Roma the *gagè* also began to migrate. Compared with those of the Roma, their migration chains are much less structured and destinations are much more fragmented. During my field-work in August 2010, I witnessed the drama of a Romanian woman conned by a fake work brokerage firm. The woman, with no relatives in Italy, had read an advertisement in the local newspaper and entered into a contract including an air ticket, directions for reaching Naples, and a contact with a local agent who would provide work within the first 72 hours of arrival. She was scared because neither she nor her five travelling companions knew Italian, nor was it specified what work would be offered. I dissuaded her from leaving and in the end she said:

When one relies on relatives or friends, it is one thing because you know where to go. But this happens only among gypsies; they all help each other. Among us Romanians, no; everyone for himself.<sup>25</sup>

25. Dorina, Răcășdia, August 16, 2010.

The Roma have thus accumulated social capital, which, in some cases, they have also made available to the *gagè*. For example, some people travel on the minibus belonging to Aurel, a Roma from an influential family that occupied a prominent position managing local businesses under socialism. Aurel arrived in Turin in 1997 when the trade in fuel from Serbia began to decline, and since 2002 he has operated weekly runs between Romania and Italy. When passenger demand increased, Aurel hired his neighbour, a young *gagè*, as the driver of a second bus. Aurel has emphasised the importance of trust between the passengers and driver because they are linked by mutual dependence.

The fact that I am a gypsy and many of them are not does not count. But there must be trust because passengers need the driver and the driver needs passengers. To do business one must be able to calculate over the long term and have the courage to take risks. I carry men without a license. When interrogated anyone could tell the police, including a passenger under pressure. It is not easy to prove that I transport people without receiving money; but people need me to get to Italy.<sup>26</sup>

In some cases, Roma enriched by migration to Italy have even lent money to the *gagè*, though, according to the *gagè*, one would resort to this option only in cases of extreme need. The evidence shows a contrast between “we Romanians” and “the gypsies,” but also recognition of interdependence, in which the Roma occupy a prominent position.

There are also some Romanians who have received money from the gypsies. I would never do that. When gypsies lend money to the Romanians, they make them sign a contract; they have their lawyers, who say that we must return double after a month and then the debt increases more and more. They have cheated elderly Romanians; they have come to make their homes in this way. They are more united. If something happens to a Romanian, the other Romanians turn their heads; if there is a conflict with a gypsy, all the other gypsies get in the middle. For this reason, the gypsies have all gone to the same place, but the Romanians have all gone to different places.<sup>27</sup>

Some Romanians have emulated Roma migration strategies, appreciating their economic success. Mrs. Elena, who suffers from diabetes, is

26. Aurel, Răcășdia, August 10, 2010.

27. Dorel, Vrăniuf, July 25, 2010.



the mother of three children, all unemployed, and her husband worked as a shepherd for years for €100 a monthly. Today she survives on social aid in a dilapidated building in the centre of Vršni. In 2007 she and her husband decided to go to Turin, after observing that all the Roma neighbours were able to acquire nice homes with the money earned in Italy. Cristi, a Roma from the countryside, accompanied her and gave advice her on the best places to beg. The Roma pioneers, who know the urban geography, have thus organised the arrival of other villagers. According to Aurel:

I was in a flat near Porta Susa; and I received a lot of guys. When others arrived, I took them to a large abandoned house near Piazza Stampalia at the end of the 9; I checked that everything was okay. They did not bother anyone; there were about 30 of them; and the cops were even playing football with them. The only problem was the bathroom; everyone was taking care of their needs in the plants, and eventually the people around here complained and they had to leave.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4. *The social signs of migration*

Signs of Roma migration in Italy are tangible and determine public perception of change. One of the first visible effects of migration has been the shift of the Roma from the peripheral areas towards the centre of the villages. Today, many Roma live in the midst of Romanians and from the outside their homes are difficult to distinguish, radically changing the residential geography of a population, which had remained unchanged for years. Țigania, the neighbourhood where the Roma traditionally lived, has over time acquired a specific connotation, becoming a space of social relations and symbolic relationships. For many *gagè* it was, and still is, the most visible manifestation of the Roma identity: messy, poor, and dirty.

For the Roma, Țigania is still a place full of meaning, of sociality, the place where their fathers were rooted, where all of their descendants will come from. On the other hand, the Roma themselves have internalised the *gagè* stigma and made it their own. For those who have built homes elsewhere, leaving Țigania represents a form of social emancipation they are proud of:

28. Aurel, Răcășdia, August 10, 2010.



Image 3. An old house in Țigania.

I grew up in the neighbourhood of the gypsies, in a small house. My first husband was born in the same neighbourhood and my in-laws were there. With work in the collective and cleaning houses I managed to save a little money and then with earnings from Italy I bought the house from a Romanian on the main road. I almost never go to Țigania, and I do not want my niece to go [there], because she is studying and I want her to become a respected person. It is so dirty there that I am ashamed, and even when my mother-in-law comes to me I hope they leave as soon as possible.<sup>29</sup>

In Vărăniuț, as in many other villages, thanks primarily to the money generated by migration to Italy, Roma have often moved and bought houses from Romanians. This phenomenon is also the result of the changing social and demographic composition. The Romanian *gagè*, with very small families and very low birth rates, are an aging population and the few young people there are prefer to move to the cities and the big houses have slowly deteriorated and lost value. The owners are left with no other

29. Mirela, Vărăniuț, July 22, 2009.

option than to sell, given the insistence of many Roma families. In some cases, the transfer of ownership took place in exchange for services offered by the Roma. Adrian, a Roma who now lives in Turin, has taken over the big house and land of an alcoholic countryman who lived alone and has no heirs. Veta, Adrian's wife, cooks, does the laundry, and brings medicine to the man, who now lives in a nursing home in the city.

The *gagè* observe this expansion of the Roma population with discomfort and unease because it is read as conquest by the Roma of spaces that were perceived as exclusive. The Roma have not only bought the *gagè* houses, but have built new, large and luxurious homes, often on the main roads.

Many Roma had nothing when they came here to Răcășdia. Many of them loaded and unloaded sacks of corn in exchange for a little food. Think about the story of Ion. He lived with seven children in a shack on the outskirts of town. Now each child has built a villa on the main road, with flowers and bright colours. [...] The daughter has bought the land of a poor Romanian drunkard, has built a palace, and now just waits for the Romanian to die to tear down the cabin.<sup>30</sup>

The primary school teacher complains about the change in the neighbourhood: in the 1970s she bought a home in the most respectable and quiet part of the town, surrounded by *gagè* families. Today the young people have sold their homes and she is surrounded only by Roma families who were able to buy homes and land with earnings from migration to Italy. The teacher said she did not to have any relationship with them, but complains of chaos, disorder, and noise.

A house is the first asset they acquire with their money earned abroad. The most desirable building sites, as we have seen, are those on the sides of main roads where everyone can see the status of the family. The new Roma houses reflect a syncretism in which Western-inspired architectural styles (neoclassicism, eclecticism) combine with other elements linked to the traditional professions (elaborate eaves and wrought iron roof battlements).<sup>31</sup> The choice of a brightly coloured façade is important because it responds

30. Antonel, Răcășdia, August 3, 2010.

31. Grăf in his study of "gypsy palaces" highlights how in every region of Romania (Transylvania, Banat, and Moldova) specific architectural features are linked to the local context. R. Grăf, *Palatele țigănești. Arhitectura și cultura. Working Papers in Romanian Minority Studies* (Cluj Napoca: ISPMN, 2008).



Image 4. Roma building a new house.

to a criterion of differentiation with respect to the other houses. The interiors are also full of significant details; often the ceilings of the rooms are decorated with bas-reliefs in the shape of a dollar or euros.

The house is presented as a stage on which one's new identity is displayed, particularly important on ritual occasions when the house is open to relatives and acquaintances. The *ruga*, the feast of the patron, in Banat represents the most important time of year for each village. Over two days the community comes together to celebrate; public events, the celebration of Mass, evenings with live music and shows alternate with more family-oriented moments. Each domestic group provides abundant food and drink to guests in their home. The decoration of the home and preparation of the meals can last several days and leads to a symbolic competition in which the migrants showcase their achievements abroad. Some Roma families return to Romania in August in time to decorate their domestic spaces for the festival.

Even at baptisms and weddings an aperitif is served in the house of the groom or the baptised child. In August of 2009 I participated in the preparation of a christening for a Roma girl, the daughter of migrants.



Image 5. Roma attending to a baptism party in the town centre.

One of the aspects on which the parents placed greatest emphasis was the organisation of the procession in the town centre from the child's home to a banquet hall.

First we offer pork and cabbage rolls in the living room of the house. Then we take a long ride along the main road from one end of the village before entering the restaurant. Everyone must see what fine clothes we have; everyone should know that the gypsy Marinela had the most beautiful baptism.<sup>32</sup>

More than one hundred guests attended the baptism, some from Spain, others from Turin and Genoa. Among these, only four were *gagè*. *Gagè* neighbours remained on the roadside the whole time, observing the clothes and the cars of the guests who attended the party with a mixture of envy and dismay.

Not all Roma who have migrated have been able to improve their housing conditions however. In the locations I studied, they continue to be in extended family groups, consisting of several generations, living in

32. Marinela, Răcășdia, August 17, 2009.

very precarious sanitary conditions in dilapidated buildings without running water. Their homes are the object of stigma by the *gagè* and, as we have seen, by those Roma who have managed to improve. The increase in social polarisation has also led to the emergence of a growing band of new poor people, who over the years of socialism had enjoyed better living conditions. Thus it is not difficult to find run-down homes inhabited by *gagè*, which do not differ at all from those of their fellow Roma poor.

##### 5. *Gagè discourses on social change and the construction of Roma otherness*

The socio-economic transformations that took place after 1989 along with migration to Italy have generated expectations, fears, disappointments, and representations of self and other that emerge in the discourses of both the Roma and the *gagè*. When the *gagè* speak about the Roma, their judgements reflect the social and economic changes that have occurred in recent years. With reference to the period of socialism, Banat is described as the *fruntea* of Romania, the most advanced region in terms of economic proximity to the West and its permeability with regard to technological and social progress. These statements about the past are always accompanied by contemporary frustration, the painful realisation that this primacy was undermined by corruption and the ineptitude of the leaders. The *fruntea* is always associated with the concept of *civilizație* (civilisation), similar to the French *civilité*, which implies a moral model of domination of one social group over others, which in Romania also intersects with discourses on ethnicity.<sup>33</sup> The inhabitants of Banat consider themselves more civilised than other Romanians because their history is built on intense cultural exchanges with Europe. In this sense, when referring to the Roma from their territory, the *gagè* call them “our gypsies” and emphasise how they have internalised some of the social and cultural patterns of the majority population, thus distinguishing themselves precisely in terms of civilisation: smaller families, openness, and confidentiality in interpersonal relationships. The distinction between who was born in a village and who has

33. See Engerbringsten, *Exploring Gypsiness*. On the genesis of Western thought on the concept of civilisation, see N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).



come from outside is important. Being born in a place means having roots in the land where their ancestors are buried and knowing the ethos of the place. Although almost half of the inhabitants of Vršni were not born there, these people continue to be defined by the others as *venetici* (foreigners) forty years after their arrival and to remain partially distinct from Roma who were born in the village. In this case, the symbolic border is between natives and foreigners:

Those gypsies worked for us and were ours, because they had learned the rules for staying among us, whether as a maid, or as a labourer in the fields.<sup>34</sup>

But these speeches about “our gypsies” often referred to the past. The representations have changed radically when the *gagè* speak of today. The change in rhetoric is connected to the strong perception of a reversal of power relations and status over the last few years. The director of the Răcășdia school told me about her meeting with a Roma to whom she had rented some land. On entering the house to collect the rent, she was struck by the incredible opulence of the house and noted that the maid who had opened the door was a Romanian. For the director who had spent her childhood being cared for by Roma, this meeting was shocking. When the *gagè* speak of the Roma of today, their discourse expresses two variants: the very rich gypsy and the very poor gypsy. These are the words of a gentleman I encountered at a village party:

I do not tolerate the gypsies who are too rich, those who have made money in Italy; but I will not tolerate those who are too poor either. There are very few in between, medium, like the majority of Romanians, like me; I repair washers and I have always worked honestly; but now I cannot pay the rent. Few Roma are like my neighbour, he is an exception because it has always worked, he was Romanised.<sup>35</sup>

The variant of a too-rich gypsy is connected to the stigmatisation of excess. Roma multimillion-dollar marriages with limousines, helicopters, and expensive singers are get the most attention in the local news and are also the most criticised by Romanians.<sup>36</sup> The palaces of the gypsies are seen as symbols of wealth of morally dubious origin and, therefore, illegitimate.

34. Vasile, Răcășdia, August 14, 2009.

35. Ovidio, Răcășdia, August 2010.

36. The most famous weddings are those of the gypsies of Strehaja, a town in the district of Mehedinți, not far from Caraș Severin. A “Nunta Strehaja” YouTube search will





Image 6. “Gypsy palaces” in Tivaniu.

Even the variant of too-poor type of gypsy hints at a process of collective guilt: the gypsies are poor because they choose to be, discriminating against themselves. They are not adapted to the modern, efficient, capitalist world. Many Romanians complain that the condition of these Roma is the way it is because it was not possible to conclude the forced assimilation project proposed by Ceaușescu. In this sense, the most difficult Roma to help are the “half-integrated,” those urbanised in the time of socialism, to whom the tools of civilisation were offered, but who escaped state control after 1989. The discourse on material deprivation is dangerously confused with that of cultural difference; gypsy culture is thus equated to the culture of poverty.<sup>37</sup>

call up hundreds of videos of gypsy weddings of *A Thousand and One Nights* inspiration, with colourful comments made by Romanians.

37. On classification processes which see in the Roma the essentialisation of poverty, see the work of G. Kligman, “On the social construction of ‘otherness’: Identifying ‘The Roma’ in post-socialist communities,” *Review of Sociology* 7 (2001), pp. 61-78.

In some cases, poverty is actually removed from the cultural sphere and naturalised. An employee of the hospital of Oravița, a paediatrician and fervent Adventist preacher, spoke of a genetic defect at the source of gypsy backwardness, a defect transmitted from generation to generation from Ishmael forward.

They are a lower branch; they are the laziest, the most thieving, and the poorest. This has to do with blood, with genetics. Gypsies have blood with the predisposition of Ishmael, the illegitimate son of Abraham, who he had with a slave, which gave rise to the Muslims and the gypsies. A genetic deviance. Whether they are in Romania or they go to Italy, they always remain the same.<sup>38</sup>

A few Romanians recognise the benefits that the Roma earnings made abroad have had on local economies. Among these is the mayor of Răcășdia who stressed that the village should be grateful to the Roma migrant families because they are the only ones to have given a boost to the weak local reality with their remittances and the construction of new homes. He said very pragmatically, “Money has no ethnicity.” A similar point of view was taken by the Orthodox priest, for whom migration has positively influenced the mentality of the Roma, improving their material condition and bringing them closer to the standard of Romanians:

I went into the home of gypsies who had come from Italy to do the blessing. I can say that they are emancipated: they have a bath, a kitchen, a dining room with refined colours, clean curtains, large beds and furniture just like in magazines. Before, when you made a meal for the dead, they put the lamb directly on the table and carved it with a knife, now they drink from crystal glasses, and the sweets are covered with a cloth to protect them from flies. I have not found such great civilisation even in the case of the Romanians.<sup>39</sup>

The discourse on Roma is thus associated in an essential manner with talk about what happens abroad. In most cases, it is emphasised that the Roma are responsible for Romanian migrants being discriminated against and rejected in destination countries. The camouflage strategies of the gypsies are so refined that they “pass themselves off as Romanians when they are not Romanians,” discrediting the entire Romanian population. The distancing from the Roma takes place via two different narratives. The first emphasises how their migration (that of non-Roma) is radically different

38. Nicolae, Răcășdia, August 12, 2010.

39. Orthodox priest, Răcășdia, August 11, 2010.

from that of the Roma. After complaining about the continuous departures of Roma children committed to begging and street life in Italy, the director of the Ticvanu Mare school pointed out with pride how every summer she visits her nephew who has lived in Italy for years and works as a lorry-driver “with regular papers and an Italian identity card.” For the director the difference is based on the intentions underlying migration: these are well defined for the *gagè*, confused and without planning for the Roma.

Furthermore, the *gagè* frequently emphasise their differences with respect to the attitudes that migrants take on once they return to the village. While the *gagè* maintain respect for other citizens, the Roma exert symbolic violence on the social body of the village with their aggressive public behaviour. A second rhetorical mode to mark distance is to say that migration is, by definition, the behaviour of a “gypsy,” affirming that no Romanian has migrated from Banat, but has at most taken trips abroad. When I introduced the subject of my research at a literary symposium in Răcășdia, a speaker countered with subtle irony when referring to the alleged deportation procedures of Roma from France in August 2010:

The million Romanians in Italy are almost all gypsies! We Romanians here are well at home. Now the million gypsies in Italy will increase because even the French are sending them back!

## 6. *The voice of the Roma*

Likewise, the Roma distinguish themselves from the *gagè* in their speech. With a clear sense of revenge, they highlight how the anger of the *gagè* is the result of social frustration and envy. Roma Esmeralda told me that a conflict erupted between *gagè* and Roma in a village in the area. A group of Roma that had returned from Italy were listening to loud music and talking. The Roma were surrounded by some impatient *gagè* who began to threaten them and, after mutual provocations, a fight broke out. The police who intervened only fined the Roma. Esmeralda offered yet another example:

The gypsies have set aside money, in one way or another, and now enjoy it at home. The Romanians are envious; they cannot stand it. There are many such stories in the area. In Timișoara there was a gypsy wedding, with carriages and horses, and the police diverted the traffic. The Romanians in cars made a big protest. Before, during communism, they asked permission and

afterwards could do what they wanted, the decisions of the authorities are not arguable!<sup>40</sup>

The Roma also deftly overturn the discourse on social insecurity monopolised by the *gagè* and make it their own. The wealthy Roma often refer to having experienced fear first-hand. Roma Marinela decided to install an alarm in her house some vagrants entered her yard at night-time. She is certain that they were poor *gagè* who came from elsewhere.

On the issue of accumulated wealth, the Roma express a certain ambivalence. On one hand, they condemn the excessive accrual of some, especially when it is not connected to practices of redistribution. The concept of *paciv* (honour) is connected to the ability to demonstrate material well-being and, at the same time, generosity through shared consumption: wealth accumulates through transactions with *gagè*, but is respected only if given to others. The Roma stress how they do not set money aside, but spend it, in contrast to *gagè* who save and are not generous. They describe with disgust how the *gagè* maintain accounts of daily expenditures.<sup>41</sup> Rumours about the Roma of Ticvanu Mare and their villas can be interpreted in this sense. The Roma from Răcășdia and Vraniuț argue that the buildings were constructed with earnings from the prostitution of women in Italy; this is a source of shame, so much so that some Roma reported to me that they do not even want to drink from the same glasses as the men of Ticvanu Mare.<sup>42</sup> The stigma associated with the inhabitants of Ticvanu Mare is not derived from the alleged activities of the wives, but rather from the fact that this wealth is consumed only in small nuclear families. The Roma often repeat the same things that they hear among the *gagè*, that the West has corrupted their morals and has led to a violation of the basic rules related to honour and shame. Young people no longer respect the elderly; women no longer respect men; few Roma women are virgins at their marriages; they no longer make multiple visits between relatives. Catia, an elderly Roma householder, often compares the past and the present:

Here in the village many Romanians are among themselves, and the gypsies are also among themselves; there is little collaboration. But this also happens in gypsy families. In the past [it] was different: gypsies helped everyone;

40. Esmeralda, Răcășdia, August 19, 2010.

41. See Engerbringsten, *Exploring Gypsiness*.

42. For the Roma, not eating from the same plate or drinking from the same glass is one of the stronger symbolic ways to deny a bond.



Image 7. Roma mother and son in the new living room.

when a guest arrived, he was welcomed into homes in the best way. Now the visits no longer even take place, because of the gossip, they always speak ill of the others.<sup>43</sup>

The Roma not only construct symbolic boundaries between themselves and the *gagè*, they also create boundaries within their own groups in response to changes brought about by migration. They have created deep divisions in how they have succeeded socially and they celebrate their successes, blaming those who remained behind. Aurel, the driver of the mini-bus, values his own well-being as a result of his ability to do business and he heavily stigmatises the Roma poor, calling them *înapoiati*.<sup>44</sup>

The Gypsies of Vrancea are stupid because they never knew how to take opportunities, do business. In business you must value whoever is before you:

43. Catia, Vrancea, February 4, 2010.

44. This term has a double meaning as reflected in the definition in the vocabulary of the Romanian language. "One whose mind is not sufficiently developed, deficient" and "One who remained behind from a cultural, social, and economic point of view".

if he is smarter than you, you must let him stay, you must find the point of weakness of those before you. I know gypsies from Timișoara, who are much richer than the *gagè*; they know how to do business. [...] Many gypsies who are now in Italy are the poorest of all. I know of people here who are so poor they ask for money to buy an apple; they are in Italy and they are begging there. There are those there who do not know how to do anything, yet there they are. These gypsies were poor even before; they were not the ones who saw the world, who traded horses and gold.<sup>45</sup>

Ion, a young Roma who migrated to Italy seven years ago, has a different story to tell. He comes from a very poor family and has always worked as a day labourer in agriculture. In Turin he lived in several slums in the suburbs, moving from one to the other due to fires and evictions; he lived on charity and selling used clothing collected from the garbage in the market. In Romania he was back for the first time in the summer of 2009 where he succeeded in rebuilding the roof of the hut where his elderly mother lives with the little money he had set aside. Ion often relates his story to that of other Roma who were deemed more fortunate than he, but emphasises how his current situation is also connected to a different moral attitude that makes him a “true gypsy”:

I have not done much, I know. In my family we have always been unfortunate. I lost my dad when I was little; I was the first male and I had many responsibilities. And in Italy I have never managed to get into a project, those that earn you money [...] Because there are more of us who have managed to have a beautiful house. And now here I am still in the same place where I was twenty years ago. But in my family every little bit you have you split with others, I myself cannot keep anything. Because I am a real gypsy!<sup>46</sup>

When the Roma talk about Italy they often echo the dominant discourses of the majority seeking a category or a social group to blame. For various Roma it is the violent and unscrupulous Moldovan immigrants who, after the tranquillity of Banat was destabilised in the socialist years, now take advantage of Italy and often declare themselves gypsies, leveraging and consolidating the negative symbolic capital related to the Roma.

Here it always went well, when the rest of Romania was eating black bread and porridge, we in Banat ate white bread. Then the jeans, the music, all like

45. Aurel, Răcășdia, August 10, 2010.

46. Ion, Vrâniuf, August 7, 2010.

in the West; there was no difference. The Moldavans came here and did what they now do in Italy: theft, violence. They were poor and saw the West that way. Nine-year-old girls came from Moldova with nothing and sought their fortune, or even boys. [...] They destroyed our families. And now they go directly to Italy, they no longer stop in Banat.<sup>47</sup>

In other cases, for the Roma from Banat those responsible for what happens in Italy are the Moldovan Roma, from Bucharest, or Serbian Roma. Mandra, a young Roma who lived for years in Genoa and Turin, actually uses the stereotype of the thief upon which she builds the perception of the gypsy among the *gagè*, to stigmatise the behaviour of the “other Roma.”

Be careful when you go to Bucharest, you should not show your wallet; it is full of thieves and many of them are gypsies because those are bad gypsies. When I was in Genoa, I was begging and I lost my baby Mariano: I was very afraid that a nun or an Italian *gagè* had stolen him. And as I wept for Mariano, a Serbian gypsy approached, one of those with long skirts and she stole my purse with all my documents. I returned to Romania only because I paid the border police.<sup>48</sup>

There is also the point of view of the Roma who have lived in other European countries, like Germany, and once having returned to Romania compare their experience with what they hear from friends and from television. Italy is almost always the opposite of Germany because Italy is more welcoming, but at the same time it does nothing to change the deteriorating situation by rewarding those who put forth an effort or by punishing those who do not respect the rules. The Roma Adela has a son who lives in Germany, married to an Italian, and another son in France. She emphasises the misery and degradation seen in the Italian gypsy camps where she visited some relatives:

Why in Italy do they not even do like in Germany? In Germany the gypsies there have caravans, with all the comforts, and they move from place to place. There are picnic areas where you have to ask permission from the mayor, but it is impossible to stay in the barracks. My son works on the farm of the city's waste collection; he has a contract and a nice apartment. But the Roma who live in Italy accept whatever the *gagè* give them, without opposing them.<sup>49</sup>

47. Esmeralda, Răcășdia, August 19, 2010.

48. Mandra, Vrâniuf, August 15, 2010.

49. Adela, Vrâniuf, August 6, 2010.



In this case, the symbolic distancing takes place not only from the *gagè* but also from the Roma who migrated to Italy. According to this Roma woman, the Italian situation is due to both public officials as well as those Roma who agree to live in such conditions. All these examples show how, even within the same Roma world, migration is reported in very diverse and heterogeneous ways.

## 7. Conclusions

In this paper I have analysed the complex dynamics that govern the relationship between non-Roma and the Roma in terms of social practices and representations in a specific local context, a predominantly agricultural area of Romania with small and medium-sized urban settlements. We have seen that forms of economic interdependence have always been linked *gagè* and Roma at the local level. The manual work of the Roma in the agricultural sector was required to allow the operation of state farms and management of the estates of the few landowners who had not collectivised. Further, Roma craftsmanship was essential because it provided agricultural tools and products to farmers. Roma women participated in the *gagè* domestic economy of families in which they were employed as maids. Despite these forms of interdependence, strong disparities were maintained over the years between Roma and non-Roma as far as allowing access to resources.

With the collapse of the regime, the Roma were the first to lose jobs and the first to suffer cuts in social spending and welfare. In addition, some services provided by them gradually lost their importance. In the early years after 1989, the Roma played an important role in cross-border trade, often encouraging stigmatisation on the part of the non-Roma population. Mobility abroad later became one of the major resources used by the Roma to reposition themselves socially with respect to the *gagè*. Thanks to gains achieved by migration, the Roma have bought land, built new homes, and moved from peripheral districts towards the centre of the villages. In urban planning and organisation one can clearly read the signs of social change; the representative rhetoric of each group has changed as a result.

Although a dense network of social relations and practices that bind the two groups existed, and still exists, the Romanians continuously mark boundaries for the Roma, often resorting to the concept of civilisation and

denouncing the Roma for possessing resources that were once seen as exclusively theirs: land, homes, and social status. Often the *gagè* condemn perceived excesses: on the one hand, there are Roma who are too rich, on the other, there are Roma who are too poor. Even migration to Italy is thematised by the Romanians according to ethnic connotations: some Romanians emphasise how migration is “a fact of the gypsies,” others clearly distinguish the migration of gypsies from the migration of non-gypsies, as if they were two different social phenomena.

The Roma respond to these discourses with various strategies, ranging from reiterating their otherness to interjecting the dominant discourses and reusing them to their advantage as a form of resistance. The viewpoints of the Roma are also far from homogeneous, and vary depending on gender, social status, and the migration experience. This essay shows how, for example, the Roma who have managed to establish themselves thanks to migration, distance themselves from other Roma, who remain on the fringes of local society and are often described as inadequate. I have tried to highlight how within the dominant rhetoric the ethnic dimension often serves to mask a class dimension. On this point, it is worthwhile to consider the anthropologist Sam Beck’s observations, according to which “the Romanians have treated the gypsies as a class problem, but they have seen it as a problem of race”.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the Romanians use ethnic categories to talk about issues that concern the local society in a broader sense: the increasingly weak presence of the state in support of small farmers, the arrival of foreign investors, the lack of public resources, and the social fracture between those who migrate and those who do not.

50. S. Beck, “Racism and the Formation of a Romani Ethnic Leader,” in G. Marcus, ed., *Perilous State. Conversations on Culture, Politics and Nation* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 169.



FRANCESCO VIETTI

## Old and New in Ksamil: Migration and Urban Transformation in a Southern Albanian Village

On February 20, 1991 the statue of Enver Hoxha in Skanderbeg Square, Tirana was pulled down after repeated street protests, in which young people and university students played a key role. Just two weeks later, an aged cargo ship carrying thousands of Albanian refugees docked in the port of Brindisi on the Italian coast. A second mass landing was to take place in August that year, starting an authentic exodus that, over the next twenty years, would lead to the exodus of over 1.2 million people from the country. A quarter of the population of Albania now lives abroad – a percentage in ex-socialist countries comparable only to that of the Republic of Moldova.<sup>1</sup> In the past two decades migration has become the most significant factor in the cultural, social, and economic life of Albania.<sup>2</sup> It is a force capable of shaping family biographies, the architecture of homes, the structure of villages, and the urban landscape. In the following pages I shall show how the phenomenon of migration has shaped the processes influencing the construction of spaces in post-socialist Albania. To do so, I shall draw on ethnographic observations and data collected during a period of field research carried out in the summer of 2010 in Ksamil, a coastal town in southern Albania, not far from the Greek frontier. What makes this village particularly interesting are both its unusual urban history prior to and after 1991 and the stratification of migratory flows which have made it both a destination for considerable in-migration and an equally large

1. For an analysis of migration and urban transformation in the Republic of Moldova after 1991, see F. Vietti, *Il paese delle badanti* (Rome: Meltemi, 2010).

2. A complete overview of the impact of migration on contemporary Albania can be found in R. King, N. Mai, *Out of Albania: From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2008).

emigration abroad. Lastly, a further factor of complexity and consideration concerns the geographic location of Ksamil: the village is located in the “minority zone” (*zona e minoritarëve*), a significant part of the territory of Albania which was recognised during the Communist government of Enver Hoxha as being culturally influenced by a powerful Greek-speaking Orthodox Christian minority. Even though the history of the Greeks in Albania is not one of the specific themes of my study, reference will nevertheless be made to the relationships established by this minority in terms of its identity and territory. This will help give a better understanding of how the various, constantly changing “majorities” in the population of Ksamil have defined themselves and their own land in two decades of post-socialist transformation.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. *The village of Ksamil*

The Albanian toponym Ksamil derives from the Greek *Εξάμιλια*, which means “six miles.” This is indeed the distance that separates the village from Corfu, the Greek island that stands opposite the southern-most stretch of Albanian coast. Just near the signpost at the entrance to Ksamil, in a single sweep of the eye, one can already see most of the scenic, economic, and social elements that have characterised the brief and peculiar history of this village: on the right, the terraced olive groves made by “actionists” in the 1970s and 1980s; on the left, the new Zippo discotheque and colourful parasols on the beach in the background; and in front, a jungle of building sites, houses under construction, concrete buildings and Albanian flags fluttering on recently finished roofs.

The “village” (*fshat*), as its inhabitants continue to call it, has actually become a town of over 9,000 inhabitants, of whom about 5,000 are resident and 4,000 are abroad. Twenty years ago, in 1991, fewer than 2,000 people lived in Ksamil, and forty years ago, in the early 1970s, the town did not exist at all. It is now one of the most famous seaside resorts in Albania and

3. Among various studies on the relationship between the Albanian Greeks and the construction of an identity and territory, see V. Nitsiakos, *On the Border: Transborder Mobility, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries on the Albanian-Greek Frontiers* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010); N. Gregorić Bon, “Negotiating Rubbish in Dhermi/Drimades of Southern Albania,” *Tourism, Culture and Communication*, 8: 2 (2008), pp. 123-34.



Image 1. A beach in Ksamil.

it is in the most important tourism area in the country: the stretch of coast that includes the city of Saranda, the archaeological site of Butrint, and the village of Ksamil now attracts thousands of Albanian, Macedonian, and Kosovar tourists every year.

Tourism affects every aspect of life in Ksamil. Not only does the resident population double in the summer months, but the ability to provide accommodation for tourists has influenced its urban development and the economic investment options of its inhabitants and émigrés. When visiting the town one cannot fail to notice the countless hand-made wood or cardboard signs bearing the words *dhoma me qëra* (“rooms to let”). The need for sufficient space in the summer to house the greatest possible number of tourists in private homes has meant that families in Ksamil have built, and are still building, houses far bigger than they need for themselves. This investment in housing requires an exceptional flow of income from emigrants working abroad, especially in Greece, who account for about half of the total population of the town. Tourism and allied services, however, have also had a profound effect on the landscape of Ksamil. “Ksamil is

empty in the winter – there’s nothing, everything shuts down,” I am told by Artin, the young man who was my principal guide during my study of the town. “Then in the summer everything changes: traffic builds up, tourists pour in, shops open and restaurants fill up. It’s as though we were living in two different villages.”<sup>4</sup>

## 2. *A new socialist village*

Just by a little bay on the Ionian Sea to the south-west of the city of Saranda, on the road that leads to the ancient city of Butrint, a new urban centre is being built: the village of Ksamil [...] Many boys and girls from all over Albania have come here and, with their collective work, they have dug and rearranged over 370 hectares of new land, planting over 103,000 orange, lemon and olive trees. Many of these young people have decided to make Ksamil their home. A new village with 150 families has thus been created. Pretty, comfortable houses have been built, together with premises for commercial activities, gardens and kindergartens, healthcare facilities, a compulsory education school and an agricultural school [...].<sup>5</sup>

With these words, *Shqipëria e Re* (*New Albania*) magazine announced the birth of Ksamil in 1976 in an article entitled “A New Village on the Shores of the Ionian Sea.” The foundation and subsequent development of the village are inextricably bound to the figure of Enver Hoxha, who visited the area for the first time in 1959, returning in 1966 and, lastly, in 1978. In the press and popular imagination of the Communist era, the village appeared as a material monument to the leader’s vision and foresight. Insistence on the idea of having the village built with the volunteer labour of young people made Ksamil one of the model creations of the Socialist regime, on a par with the great dam on the River Drin, the railway network, and the reclamation of marshlands.

4. Like all ethnographies, my study owes a great deal of its unique aspects and value to the work of the person who gave me grassroots information about the social, economic, and cultural conditions of the place. Here I should like to express my profound gratitude to Artin, a student of Economics at the University of Saranda, who put me up at his home during my period of research in Ksamil and who put his human and social capital at my disposal. The article is based on a total of 35 in-depth interviews conducted in Ksamil in July-August 2010.

5. N.a., “A New Village on the Shores of the Ionian Sea,” *Shqipëria e Re*, 3 (1976), p. 31.





Image 2. Ksamil under Communism.

Recollections of “Enver’s time” (*koha e Enverit*) remain in the memories of those whom everyone in the village refers to as *ksamiliotët të vjetër*, the “old inhabitants of Ksamil.” I meet Ilias, who is sitting at a table in the Taverna Oxhaku in the town centre: “I’m fifty-four,” he says,

and in 1981 I was young and idealistic, and the secretary of the Young Communists of Korça. I finished my military service that year and, like all the others, I was looking forward to a bright future. I told my parents: I want to go where my country needs me! But those who came to work in Ksamil were given a home by the state, so I came here with other families from Panarit, our village. We lived in little houses just near the beach, with four people to a room. Those who were married lived with their families, while those who were single shared a room with their companions. There was a communal refectory and a theatre, and the work was highly organised: eight hours a day, with Sundays off. Every morning, before we started work, we used to spend half an hour reading the newspaper and practising sports. We cut roots, picked lemons, and built the cooperative. Bear in mind that there had never been a village here, just wolves and animals. Every fortnight the workers were joined by groups of “actionists” (*akcionisti*), young people from all over Albania who completed their period of voluntary service here. Everyone dreamt of coming here, because unlike in other places, here the state paid and invested.

The sensation of time compressed brought about by the rapid growth of the village has meant that the “old inhabitants” tend also to include those who arrived in the very early 1990s. Even so, only those who were physically present at the time of the cooperative are referred to as *vendas* (“locals”) as opposed to the *të ardhur* (“newcomers.”) The latter are further distinguished by their area of origin: there are some from Korça, some from Tepelenë, some from Kukës, and others from Permët. “*Është i vjetër*” (“he’s one of the old folk”), “*është i ardhur*” (“he’s a newcomer”) is currently the way the various inhabitants of the town are referred to.

The houses Ilias mentioned are still standing. The “four buildings” (*qatër palatet*), as they are familiarly called, are on the main street (*rruga kryesore*) that runs through Ksamil. The other sixteen constitute the very backbone of the town, stretching from the “lower centre” to the sea. Four floors tall, flaking and yellowing with age, these buildings almost disappear amid the very recent constructions all around them. The landscape we see in photos taken during the years of the cooperative is quite different, with the group of flat blocks in a sea of green fruit trees on terraced hills.

Ksamil is a fine example of what the geographer Dean S. Rugg has called the “socialist landscape,” with its terraces, reclaimed fields, and channelled waters, even though it is rapidly disappearing.<sup>6</sup> The Albanian landscape does indeed bear tangible signs of the policies and works of the Communist period, one of the most lasting legacies of the process of “autarkic modernisation” that was so much a feature of Enver Hoxha’s regime.<sup>7</sup>

6. D.S. Rugg, “Communist Legacies in the Albanian Landscape,” *Geographical Review*, 84: 1 (1994), pp. 59-73.

7. One of the most conspicuous operations affecting the landscape of Albania during the Socialist period was the reclamation of the Muzeqë plain, between the cities of Fier and Lushnjë, which involved over 250,000 hectares of land, equivalent to 36% of all cultivable land in the country. The large plots, which had been managed by collective farms, were rapidly and messily parcelled out in the 1990s after the privatisation of property, and quickly became anthropised with the construction of new settlements. Another significant legacy of the Communist period affecting the landscape was the construction of 41 new urban centres in every region of the country. These were medium-small centres, which in 1990 had less than 10,000 inhabitants each (with the exception of four larger centres, one of which was the city of Kukës), most of which (34 cases) are located in mountainous areas and linked to particular mining and production activities (24 cases). The creation of these new urban centres was not, however, accompanied by a similar level of development in road networks, which remained quite inadequate throughout the Socialist period: the total length of all roads in Albania rose from 3800 km in 1938 to a mere 7215 km in 1989. Other features of the “socialist landscape”



Image 3. The “four buildings” of the former cooperative.

“The cooperative lasted until 1990, and then it was all over,” recalls Ilias as he ends his tale.

I emigrated to Greece and also the fellow who had run the cooperative ever since 1981 left the country: he died in Greece a year ago. Every time I come back here, I think it’s a catastrophe. I no longer see the oranges, lemons... I can just dream about them. It’s no longer the place it was.

Like everyone else, Ilias is building a house on the ruins of his dreams:

There’s no longer any work in Greece, so I’m thinking of coming back here with all of my family. My children are still in Greece, but as soon as the house is ready we’ll come here to Ksamil.

include hydroelectric projects (dams and power plants) on the River Drin, the urban redevelopment of large centres like Tirana, Durrës, Shkodër and Vlorë, with the construction of new road networks and districts. For an analysis of the subject, see: M. Sivignon, “Tirana et l’urbanisation de l’Albanie,” *Revue de géographie de Lyon*, 50 (1975), pp. 333-43; D. R. Hall, “New Towns in Europe’s Rural Corner,” *Town and Country Planning*, 55 (1986), pp. 354-6; D. R. Hall, *Albania. Planning in Eastern Europe* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Ö. Sjöberg, *Rural Change and Development in Albania* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992).

### 3. *A miniature Albania*

I remember when I used to come to Ksamil as a boy in the 1980s to see my aunts and uncles, who worked in the cooperative: I was struck by the beam of the military searchlights sweeping the beach and the sea at night, and coming through the window in my bedroom... In the late 1990s I moved here, too, and now in the evenings I still see a light going round, lighting up both sea and sky, and coming through my bedroom window: the discotheque light!

Smirald laughs at the comparison and shakes his head. And yet his words sum up and encapsulate the extraordinary changes that have taken place in the village in less than two decades.

In 1991 there were 417 families in Ksamil, a total of 1,900 inhabitants. The population of the village had been kept under control for twenty years and the number of inhabitants planned and regulated to meet the needs of the cooperative. No one could move to the village and live there without the necessary permits. Memories of propaganda about this “new garden on the shores of the Ionian,” the pleasant climate and relative affluence that was enjoyed in the village thanks to the success of the cooperative, and its proximity to the Greek border all made Ksamil an ideal, much yearned-for destination for those leaving the country. While tens of thousands of Albanians sailed off to what had once been forbidden foreign countries, hundreds stopped on the shores of the sea to settle down in what had shortly before been the no less forbidden model village of Ksamil. The growth of the population in the former cooperative has never ceased, doubling every ten years: 5,103 in 1997, 6,673 in 2002, 8,301 in 2005, 9,133 in 2008.<sup>8</sup>

The most interesting aspect of this phenomenal growth rate is the extreme diversity of origins of those who have moved to Ksamil. While the neighbouring districts of Tepelenë, Skrapar and Korça have continued to be the main sources over the years, there are families in the town who have come from every corner of the country, including distant cities in the north. Just as the volunteers came from every area of Albania to build Ksamil in the 1970s, since the 1990s migratory chains and emulation have involved all districts in the country. When we analyse the provenance of the 2,500 families who live in Ksamil, we see how the variety of districts corresponds to an even greater variety of origins within each district: the inhabitants of

8. Komuna Ksamil, *Raport Vjetor*, Saranda 2010.

the town come from over 480 different localities. From big cities down to the smallest villages, from the extreme north to the extreme south – it would seem that there is no district that has not provided the village with at least one family. The composition of the population of Ksamil clearly shows how internal mobility is one of the most significant phenomena of post-Communist Albania.<sup>9</sup>

As they arrived, the influx of immigrants gave rise to new districts and sectors in Ksamil, expanding the town and giving its areas new identities. When we look at the layout of the settlements, bearing in mind the provenance and year of arrival of the inhabitants, it is possible to reconstruct the particular “immigration geography” which makes sense of the apparently chaotic and random structure of the town. Upon arrival, the sensation is immediately one of haphazard, unchecked development, but the map drawn by Artin to show me how it developed appears decidedly more orderly. The various sectors of the town, which are aligned along the main street, are characterised by the two fundamental coordinates of *space* (represented by the district of provenance in the built-up areas) and of *time* (the year of settlement). Even without any other landmarks, it is these references that mark out and institutionalise the built-up areas of Ksamil. And without street names and other points of reference, it is these parameters linked to immigration that give some order to the space and constitute Ksamil’s “migratory landscape.”

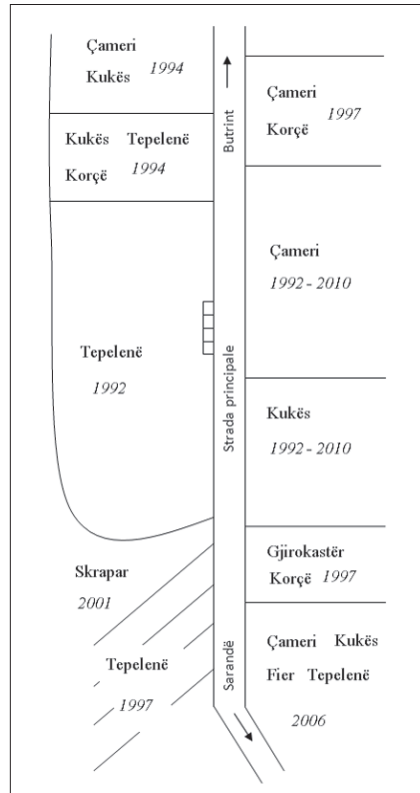


Image 4. Graphic elaboration by the author based on an original drawing by Artin.

9. J. Vullnetari, *Albanian Migration and Development: State of the Art Review*, IMISCOE Working Paper 18 (2007).

No one, or almost no one, is a “local” in Ksamil. This makes the village a true exception in the “minority zone,” in which ancestral roots and ties with the land are of huge socio-political importance everywhere, and are constantly being negotiated and claimed. “Ksamil is a sort of Albania in miniature,” says Vesel Koçiu, the current mayor of the town.

The village population is extremely varied. Being the mayor of people from so many different places, especially from rural and mountainous areas, is a real challenge. Every group is represented in the municipal council, but the real difficulty in Ksamil is not peaceful coexistence so much as providing infrastructures and services for everyone.

In actual fact, the situation on the ground is far more complex and conflictual than the ideal image given by the mayor might suggest. Mechanisms of affiliation and identity based on regions of origin play an important role in the management of local power. And the political sphere, which is portrayed by the mayor as an ideal platform for the various members of the village population, is actually the particular, though not exclusive, expression of one of the two largest groups, representing those who come from the district of Tepelenë. Ever since the municipality was set up in 1996, every mayor of Ksamil, whether democratic or socialist, has always been first and foremost “from Tepelenë.” Smirald, the young son of immigrants from Çamaria, is in no doubt:

There’ll be a real electoral contest in Ksamil only when the people from Tepelenë will have to choose between two candidates from Tepelenë! Until then it’s simple... they vote en masse, without even looking at the party!

Regional backgrounds also explain some town-planning decisions. For example, those inhabitants who are not originally from Tepelenë reproach the mayor for having “forgotten” the town centre and having spent all the money on doing up the Ksamil district where “all those from Tepelenë” live and where, by no coincidence, the mayor himself lives. “Here the streets have no names”, concludes Smirald,

except where the mayor’s friends live. There the street is called *rruga* Ali Pasha Tepelenë, in honour of their local hero. And have you seen the street? They even have solar-powered lamps, like in Europe. While the streets in the centre don’t have any lighting at all! If these aren’t privileges...

The arrival of thousands of people from all over Albania was felt as a traumatic experience by the original inhabitants of the cooperative, who

in just a few years saw the natural, human, and social landscape of Ksamil change dramatically:

I was born here in Ksamil in 1983. I spent my childhood playing with the other children from the cooperative, and all I remember is the sea and the smell of citrus fruits. Then, after 1990, the others started arriving – hundreds, thousands of people from the north and from the mountains. There were days when dozens of families arrived all together, and they would set up camp in the orchards and olive groves, then they would start putting up shacks – and they never left. They started cutting the trees, the orange and lemon trees, and just carried on until there wasn't a single one left! Ksamil today is no longer my Ksamil,

confides Tani, who now runs a mini-market full of parasols, plastic beach toys, beach sandals and swimming costumes. Over the door he has hoisted a fine Kosovo flag to attract passing tourists.

The key issue for all immigrants in Ksamil over the past twenty years has been, and still is, the purchase and possession of land. At the heart of the success – and disaster – of Ksamil is the ambiguous status of the land that originally formed the cooperative and that has now been entirely or almost entirely urbanised. The problem of land ownership, which is dramatic in all of Albania and crucial for any question concerning tourism, is, if anything, even more significant and complex in the case of Ksamil. Since there were neither settlements nor farming before the 1970s, unlike in other areas, nobody could claim possession of the land prior to the collectivisation process of the Communist period. The entire area was reclaimed, cultivated, and terraced during the years of the cooperative. So, in one way, the situation in Ksamil was simpler than elsewhere in 1991. However, the influx of in-migrants, which started immediately after the fall of the Communist system, and the consequent appropriation of land within and beyond the confines of the cooperative, immediately made the process of assigning properties that much more complex. The problem of the olive groves, which stretched across the slopes of the terraced hills, was solved without too much difficulty by assigning each cooperative worker a plot containing ten trees. The citrus orchards, however, were more of a problem because by 1994 the situation on the plain had already been compromised by the construction of dozens of new homes and the settlement of hundreds of immigrants. There were no former owners and the cooperative land belonged to the state, so when the state ceased to exist, it was easier in Ksamil than elsewhere for the incomers to obtain land and start building shacks and houses to show that they were in possession of a particular plot.





Image 5. A view from the hilltop of Ksamil.

Gjergji, the owner of the largest construction materials store in Ksamil, tells me what happened when the first waves of immigrants started arriving:

In the 1990s there was plenty of unused land. They just came here, put down a few stones to mark out the land they wanted and then slept in a shelter under a tree. Then they gradually built a fence to mark out the plot and they cut down a few trees and put up a shack where they could live. Later on, as soon as they had some money, they would build the foundations, the pillars, and a roof – the rudiments of a house, let's say – and visible proof that would also last through a period of emigration, so that nobody else could take the land. Then, of course, with the money they earned abroad, they could go ahead with building the rest of the house, but far more slowly.

Guri, who came to Ksamil from Tepelenë in 1997, did just this: “When I arrived, my brother-in-law was already here and he’d taken a large plot of land. He said: take these four stones and mark out the plot you want. So I put down the stones at the four corners of the land where our house stands today.”

This insistence on the “four stones to mark out the land” is neither coincidental nor metaphorical, for it dates back to a custom regulated by a section of the *kanun*, the common-law code that has been the subject of countless anthropological analyses.<sup>10</sup>

Without state laws to regulate property issues in a commonly accepted manner, as in the rest of Albania, the people in Ksamil made wide use of the precise guidelines laid down by the *kanun* on the subject of establishing and recognising boundaries. In particular, the ancient code establishes that:

The boundary stone has witnesses around it. There are six or twelve small rocks, which are buried in the earth around the boundary stone. When boundaries are fixed, there must also be present the Elders of the village and as many young people and children as possible so that the boundary will be retained in memory. Every tract of land, whether field or meadow, garden or vineyard, small forest or copse, woodland or pasture [...] or village – all are divided by boundaries. Someone who wishes to set a boundary or restore a forgotten one must take and bear on his shoulder a rock and a clod of earth [...] and fix the new boundary [...].

When the Elder has set the boundary, he must place his hand on it and say: “If anyone moves this stone, may he be burdened with it in the next life! [...]”. The boundaries between lands cannot be moved. Once the boundaries have been set, they are never moved again.<sup>11</sup>

Especially for its system of vendetta, the *kanun* has often been described as a threat to law and order and yet the statements gathered in Ksamil show how, in the case of the issues examined, it has proved to be a useful collection of rules for avoiding or solving disputes concerning land ownership, an issue of great importance and relevance in post-Communist Albania. Numerous ambiguities and contradictions have naturally arisen, and with ever greater consequences, in Ksamil. The system, which is respected and makes sense for the community that created it, is subject to much instrumental use when external agents are involved. Artin continues:

You can be sure that when a foreigner arrives and wants to buy a plot of land, he will find himself buying the same plot at least two or three times from as many owners all of whom lay claim to it. There have been some large international

10. P. Resta, *Il Kanun di Lek Dukagjini. Le basi morali e giuridiche della società albanese* (Nardò: Besa, 1997).

11. S. Gjeçov, L. Fox, *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit / The Code of Lekë Dukagjini* (New York: Gjonlekaj Publishing Company, 1989), p. 74.

groups, such as Club Med, which have abandoned their projects in Albania because they've found it impossible to secure ownership of a plot of land.

The entire system began to fall apart when Ksamil had to face approval of the first town-planning schemes and the need to abandon its precarious status as an "informal settlement."<sup>12</sup> The belated introduction of the law had a negative effect on the balance that had been brought about by the old customs. For example, the classification of land as having or not having planning permission led to a mechanism whereby owners of unusable land started disposing of their less valuable properties to the detriment of newcomers. Blackmail, deception, and violence thus contaminated the order and regularity that had governed the initial distribution of land. Lule recalls one particular instance in which he was a witness and played a lead role:

Here, next door to our home, there's a patch of rough ground. I know the owner and I also know why he didn't build his house there: the municipality told him it would be used for a square and that anything found there would be demolished. So it's a worthless patch, which can't be used for anything. And yet he keeps it fenced in, and I'll tell you why. Some months ago a family arrived from the north looking for a plot where they could build a house here in Ksamil. They saw this abandoned property and the owner immediately told them he would sell it to them for €3,000. They were really pleased and wanted to buy it. Fortunately, I met the lady of this family and told her I knew that nothing could be built on that plot, and that they shouldn't let themselves be deceived. She didn't want to believe me, so I told her to go to the town hall and ask for the maps, and see what they would tell her about that land. She did what I suggested and a couple of days later she came back... she wanted to kiss me, she wanted to thank me in every possible way, telling me I'd saved her family!

#### 4. *Emigrants' homes*

When you walk through Ksamil you have the clear impression that you're passing through a group of houses rather than a real town. Public

12. Law 9402 "On the Legalization, Urban Planning and the Integration of Illegal Buildings" of May 2006 defines as "informal settlements" those "areas of more than 5 hectares covered by illegal buildings." The law emphasises that these settlements are not to be equated with individual illegal buildings (such as houses or restaurants in protected zones) since the status of "informality" does not necessarily entail any violation of the law, but only a lack of the legal documents required for the possession of land or buildings.

buildings, squares, public and recreational spaces, shops and services are all reduced to a bare minimum. Houses rise up everywhere. They are generally large, on three or four floors, and only rarely are they complete. The decoration and finishings are missing and the plasterwork is only roughly applied. The place is dominated by grey reinforced concrete, with steel rods sticking out from the top floors and from the pillars, fences, and balconies.

Building material stores (*materiali ndertimi*) abound in Ksamil:

We arrived here in Ksamil from Tepelenë in 1996. Then my two sons and I emigrated to Greece, where we worked as bricklayers. In 2005 we came back and started up our own business, at the height of the housing boom. Business was very good until last year, and we had four trucks and three employees; but this year, after the demolitions, the whole market has come to a standstill and now it's just us family members in the business.

Those who work in the building sector certainly have a very good idea of the recent history of Ksamil. Dritan is the owner of one of the stores in Ksamil and his observations about the behaviour of migrants in relation to construction work are indeed very interesting:

In recent years people came to us practically only for cement and iron – the materials needed for building not a real house, but the skeleton of a house. A family often builds two or three of these skeletons, simply to occupy the land, knowing that in actual fact it'll take years and years to build real homes. Then, when they're finished, each child will have a house of their own. Bear in mind that the average house here in Ksamil takes about ten or fifteen years to build. This is because the money that goes into them is earned abroad and it takes years and years of earnings and savings. But we've noticed a change since the demolitions in May. We're selling fewer base materials and more things for finishing, like tiles, paint, pipes, and so on. It seems to me that people want to go ahead and finish only the houses they're actually going to live in.

Here we need to examine the close link between migration and urban transformation, and the particular effect this interaction has had on the landscape in Ksamil. When not just one but almost all the buildings in an urban area are in the construction stage, and when these buildings take an average of over a decade to complete, we can possibly talk of an *interrupted landscape* to describe the image of a place in a perennial state

of anthropisation, in which various elements of aggregation and disaggregation come together and overlap. In Ksamil one can clearly observe a typical environment of the so-called “post-post-Communist” phase of many former Socialist-bloc countries. A stratification builds up with works from the initial Communist period (terracing, fish farming), the ruins of the late Communist period (the rusting irrigation system, abandoned land-reclamation pumps, the faded lettering on the stalls of the cooperative), post-Communist works (new houses under construction, paved roads, concrete piers, and artificial beaches) and post-Communist ruins (demolished illegal buildings, piles of garbage, the remains of bankrupt cafés and restaurants, and the open-air drainage from the houses). With their conflicting centripetal and centrifugal forces, these four levels of order and disorder give present-day Ksamil a particular appearance of which the potential is as clear to see as the limits of its development as a tourist and seaside resort.

The key to understanding these links can be found in correctly interpreting the pervasive effects of migration on Albania and, in particular, on Ksamil since the 1990s. Half of the population of the village is currently abroad. Of the 9,000 inhabitants registered in the municipality of Ksamil, less than 5,000 live permanently in the village.<sup>13</sup> The rest of the residents are working abroad, almost all of them in nearby Greece, and either they return to Ksamil only for short periods, mainly during the summer months, or they do not return at all for years on end. It is very hard to calculate the exact number of people who have emigrated, in part because monthly figures vary considerably. For example, the serious economic crisis in Greece in 2010 meant that hundreds of migrants decided to return to Ksamil in that year, even though they are ready to leave again as soon as the Greek economy shows signs of recovery.

In addition to data gathered from the municipality of Ksamil, another interesting and more precise source of information on the social impact of migration can be obtained by restricting the field of investigation and analysing the situation in one particular sector of the village. This is illustrated below in the data collected during the course of a small survey carried out in the neighbourhood around the home of the A. family, where I stayed during my research period.

13. Komuna Ksamil, 2010, Raport Vjetor, Saranda, Komuna Ksamil.

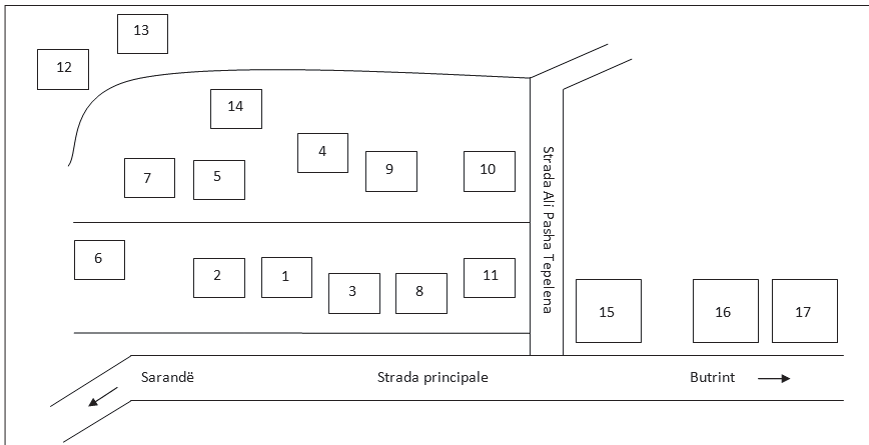


Image 6. Graphic elaboration by the author based on an original drawing by Artin.

Table 1

<i>Family</i>	<i>Provenance</i>	<i>Year of arrival</i>	<i>First year of construction</i>	<i>State of the house</i>	<i>Floors</i>
A.	Tepelenë	1999	1999	Under construction	3
B.	Tepelenë	2002	2001	Finished	2
C.	Kukës	1991	1999	Under construction	2
D.	Përmet	2004	2004	Suspended	2
E.	Përmet	2002	2002	Finished	2
F.	Malakastër	2010	2010	Finished	2
G.	Malakastër	1998	2000	Under construction	2
H.	Greece	1998	1998	Under construction	1
I.	Përmet	2002	2006	Under construction	1
J.	Malakstër	1998	2000	Suspended	1
K.	Tepelenë	2004	2004	Suspended	3
L.	Gjirokastër	2004	2004	Finished	1
M.	Skrapar	1998	2000	Finished	2
N.	Tepelenë	2001	2001	Finished	2
O.	Saranda	1998	2006	Finished	3
P.	Tepelenë	1992	2006	Finished	3
Q.	Konispol	1993	1999	Under construction	3

Table 2

<i>Family</i>	<i>Members in family unit</i>	<i>No. of which emigrated</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Tourism activity</i>
A.	6	2	Greece	Room rental and guide
B.	5	1	Cyprus	Room rental
C.	5	0	/	Restaurant
D.	5	5	Greece	/
E.	6	3	Sweden	/
F.	2	0	/	/
G.	9	7	Greece	Room rental
H.	2	2	Greece	/
I.	2	2	Greece	/
J.	1	1	Greece	/
K.	2	2	Greece	/
L.	3	1	Greece	/
M.	3	1	Greece	Room rental
N.	4	2	Italy	Room rental
O.	4	2	Greece	Supermarket and room rental
P.	4	0	/	Hotel
Q.	4	2	Greece	Café and room rental
<b>TOT.</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>33</b>		

As we can see, the data collected in this micro-context confirm the estimates provided by the town hall in Ksamil. Exactly 50% of the population have currently emigrated. In almost all cases, the country of destination is nearby Greece and the general propensity of the population to emigrate is reflected in the plans to build and enlarge their homes: only half the houses in the neighbourhood are finished, and the rest are under construction. In some cases, work is still in progress, while in others it has been suspended. In four cases, the entire family unit is abroad, so the house is currently uninhabited.

An analysis of the structure and characteristics of homes reveals a very interesting aspect of research into migration. By their very nature, homes contain a variety of symbolic meanings, which vary according to the local context and history of the migrants. During my previous field research in Moldavia, I was able to observe how emigration has led to the development of an architectural style called *euro-stil*, in other words a “European style,” which sums up the ideals of modernity, cleanliness, comfort





Image 7. The house of Artin's family.

and beauty picked up by migrants during their experiences of life and work abroad. House renovations in the “European style” reflect a parallel “re-structuring” of affective relations and the organisation of family life among migrants and their relatives.<sup>14</sup>

In the case of Ksamil, the situation appears to be what I might refer to as reversed with regard to Moldavia. The houses in Ksamil offer a precise symbolic representation of the structure of the families who inhabit them, as well as of the town's pursuit of tourism. Counting the storeys of each building gives one an idea of the number of children who live in them, or who intend to live in them once they return from abroad. One floor for each child, to which another one is added for renting out rooms to tourists: this is the basic structure around which the dwellings in Ksamil are designed. Walking through the town, one cannot help but notice that there are no small houses in Ksamil, only dwellings of considerable size. “This is the only secure form of investment in Albania,” says Artin.

Nobody trusts banks with their money, and businesses run the risk of failure even though many people certainly do try. I, for example, used to think about opening a car wash... that's it: once you've bought your car, there's nothing

14. Vietti, *Il paese delle badanti*.

else to invest in other than a home. Here in Ksamil, all the men who live in Greece are earning money for their houses. If the family has two or three children, they all work to help pay for the building and then, since we've got beaches here and lots of tourists, everyone wants to build a room or two for rental, so that they can earn money during the summer... don't you think that's a good form of investment?

Therefore, what matters in Ksamil is not the style or aesthetic value of the building, but the space it offers, the size of the investment, and the profit that can be made from it. There are no architects in Ksamil; the families themselves make a sketch of the layout they want, with the number and arrangement of the rooms, and the builders do the rest. "That's why our houses are so square-cut: it's as though they were made with a ruler!" concludes Artin. Unlike the "extroverted" houses in Morocco or the "European style" ones in Moldavia, the main focus in Ksamil is solidity: the solidity of the house as a reflection of the solidity of the family and of its roots in the town. Ksamil families are families of migrants, who have come from elsewhere, and many of whom have since gone elsewhere, and in their houses, in the foundations and robust concrete pillars, they find a sort of permanence, a foothold in the territory of their village. Rather than spend their money on attractive ornaments, those who can afford it, prefer to build castles and towers of stone to symbolise their occupancy of the space and the defence of their own family unit.<sup>15</sup>

About 3,000 homes have been built in Ksamil since the early 1990s. As the municipal administration itself admits, unfortunately, less than half of these have the necessary permits and ownership certificates required for building and habitability. This situation of administrative irregularity turned Ksamil into a giant "informal settlement" and ultimately led to the sensational "clean-up campaign" which in May 2010 involved the demolition of 300 houses in the town.<sup>16</sup>

15. D. Dalakoglou, "Building and Ordering Transnationalism: The 'Greek House' in Albania as a Material Process," in D. Miller, ed., *Anthropology and the Individual: A Material Culture Perspective* (Oxford: Berg, 2009).

16. A detailed report drafted in 2007 by the World Bank and the Albanian Ministry of Public Works provided an accurate overview of the complex situation of informal settlements in Albania. The study points to three main causes that have had a negative influence on the unchecked, disorderly process of urbanisation which began in the 1990s and is still under way today: the absence of town-planning schemes in many places, the absence of

Even though there had long been talk of government action to put an end to unauthorised building, in the spring of 2010 there were no particular signs to suggest what was about to take place in Ksamil in early May.

They came one morning, with the army and police. They put a security cordon around Ksamil and then started moving through the town, house by house, marking those that were to be demolished. It was terrible! They stayed here for two weeks, knocking down houses with bulldozers, earthmovers, and pneumatic drills... When they left, Ksamil was reduced to the state you see it in now! Not even the war, not even the Nazis did so much damage in Albania. I've never seen anything like it – three hundred homes destroyed. And it's not finished yet!

says Mondì, who runs one of the petrol stations in town.

They said they'll be back in the autumn to finish knocking down the houses where people live – those who still have a room to live in! What an outrage! Ksamil has never recovered since then. Tourism is back at 2005 levels but the real driving sector, building, has come to a halt. Migrants are no longer investing. I know five families whose homes have been destroyed and who've already decided that they'll never come back. They'll continue living in Greece. What else can they do? They've lost everything – here they have just a pile of rubble.

an overall strategy for the creation of basic infrastructure, and the difficulties involved in securing legal possession of land with planning permission. The origins of these difficulties are certainly to be found in the contradictory nature of Albanian laws on the ownership of land, the privatisation of which was marked in the post-Communist period by unsolvable legislative problems: the first law to be approved, Law 7501 of 1991 "On the Land", ruled that land belonging to state and farming cooperatives was to be distributed among the former workers. However, two new laws from 1993 (Law 7698 "On Restitution and Compensation of Property to ex-Owners" and Law 7699 "On the Compensation to ex-Owners of Agricultural Lands") put emphasis on the need to return the land to those who had owned it prior to collectivisation during the Communist period. The situation was made even more confusing by the attribution of different statuses to the lands in question: some were referred to as "agricultural" and others as "urban" (and thus zoned for building,) leading to endless disputes between state and citizens, former owners and former workers of the land. With the social and political upheavals of 1997-1998 the situation got totally out of control, and the government returned to the issue only in 2006, with the much-contested law on the legalisation of informal areas.



Image 8. The consequences of the “clean-up campaign”.

The choice of houses to be demolished was based on time factors rather than on quality concerns, choosing the approval date of Law 9402 “On Legalisation, Urban Planning, and the Integration of Illegal Buildings,” which was passed by the Albanian parliament in May 2006, as the criterion for selection. This law explicitly stated that buildings on which construction work had already started at the time it came into effect could be legalised, while all those that were built at a later date without the necessary permits would be demolished, a method of intervention that immediately sparked off suspicions, jealousies and corruption.

If they’d adopted a clear, credible criterion, everything would have been different, and the demolitions would also have been useful. To give an example: it had been known for years that buildings were to be constructed only on the left-hand side of the main road, but not on the right, on the side of the sea and the beaches. That’s it – if they’d knocked down the houses by the sea and let the others stand, it would have been more reasonable,

explains Smirald, a guide at the nearby archaeological park of Butrint.

But on that side there were also buildings constructed by very powerful people in Ksamil – people who could put big money on the table, with powerful friends. So the buildings on the sea remain standing and the little ones on the other side have been destroyed.

Gjion, a shepherd from Tepelenë, owns a small butchery on the ground floor of his home:

Look what's happened to my shop! And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. In May they came and told me my house would be demolished. They started work and destroyed the first three walls of the shop. I was weeping, trying to explain that my house was in order, begging them not to demolish it. So they checked their map once again and realised that my house had been there since before 2006. They apologised for their mistake and told me to put in a request to the state for compensation, and that everything would be paid for.

So, even though he suffered a serious loss, Gjion did manage to save the three floors of his home above his gutted shop. The house belonging to the Mirdita family next door met with a very different fate; it was reduced to a pile of rubble. The family, who are living temporarily in the only habitable room left, have a very different view of the events in May from that of their shepherd neighbour:

The only difference between us and them is that we had less money to give to the police. The others managed to stop the demolition by handing over all their savings, while we had just built the second floor and had nothing left to stop it from going ahead. In September they'll be back to complete the job, and we'll have to leave. It's not fair; everything that's been done is just one big injustice.

These different accounts of the demolitions are another indication of the lack of cohesion in Ksamil society as it has developed over the past two decades and belies the impressions the mayor tries to put across. "Ksamil is not a real village, the people here don't feel they're part of the community. There's no solidarity. It's true that there have never been clashes, but when the moment of truth came, nobody did anything to help each other and save the village," says Mondri bitterly.

If we'd been in Mursia or Vrinë, where the Greeks are, all the inhabitants would have joined hands, forming a human chain around the village and they'd have defended their homes, all together. But here people just look after themselves – it's every man for himself.

The “clean-up campaign” undoubtedly caused enormous economic harm to many inhabitants in Ksamil and to the community as a whole. If we consider that a two-storey house requires an investment of about €25,000, and that exactly 282 homes were totally destroyed, we can estimate a total loss of about €7 million of capital invested by the inhabitants of the town. To the net loss of investment, we also need to add the lost revenue from the tourist season, which was adversely affected by the demolitions, and the piles of rubble still at every street corner. The economic situation has thus led to a social situation, and both constitute a point of no return in the history of tourism in Ksamil.

Even though it was an ugly affair, this year’s operation will certainly change the future development of Ksamil. If the politicians and inhabitants realise that the only possible future for the village is to become a real holiday resort, where it’s pleasant to spend a few days or weeks, then this disaster will have had a positive effect. In place of the destroyed homes, it will be necessary to plant trees, make squares with fountains, put in benches and amusements for children, open shops and restaurants, and fix the roads,

says Smirald. A view that appears to be in sharp contrast with the assessment given by Astrit, the former mayor of Ksamil:

The houses were destroyed in order to free up the land. The place had become packed out, so they decided to clear out a few plots. In a few months’ time, businessmen will certainly be here, buying up land on the cheap – after all, it’s worthless now. They’ll clear away the rubble and put up some big buildings or hotels. I bet they’ll find a way to declare them legal,

says the former mayor laughing bitterly.

## 5. Conclusion

By retracing the history of the village of Ksamil from its “foundation” during the Communist period as part of Enver Hoxha’s “New Albania” through to the end of the cooperative and the subsequent transformation of the village into a sort of “migration hub,” subject to considerable migration both incoming and outgoing, my aim has been to illustrate the peculiar nature of a town where the concepts of “majority” and “minority” have been constantly redefined during the course of two post-Communist decades. Even though it is in the Greek “minority zone” in the south of Albania, un-

like its neighbouring villages, which consist of centuries-old stone houses inhabited by Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians with ancestral ties to the land and to Greece, their motherland, Ksamil is a village where all of the inhabitants form both a “majority,” since they are Albanian and a “minority,” since they are national migrants living tens or hundreds of kilometres from where they were born. They constitute a highly diverse and heterogeneous population, which has an ambiguous relationship with the territory: as the recent “clean-up campaign” launched by the Albanian government clearly shows, the land in Ksamil does not really belong to its own inhabitants. This is a fate that many minorities in (post)-socialist countries have in common.

Almost all of the houses built by the inhabitants since 1991, and paid for by remittances sent by emigrants in Greece and income from tourism, have been classified as “informal settlements.” Due to gaps in Albanian law defining land ownership in the 1990s and 2000s, these unauthorised buildings were constructed in accordance with traditional customs and with the rituals laid down by the *kanun*. They are, therefore, in need of some form of legitimisation, together with ownership of the land. The “majority migrants” who relocated gradually in Ksamil have thus had to work out their own sense of community, negotiating their own ties to the place where they find themselves living, inventing their own status as “locals.” In other words, turning themselves into a “minority” and demanding for themselves the same instruments for building a territory with which the Albanian Greeks have long branded and institutionalised their own “zone.”





ZAIRA TIZIANA LOFRANCO

## Minorities and Housing Entitlements in Shifting Political Systems: Legal Provisions and the Experience of Displaced Sarajevans

This paper will approach the issue of urban change in post-socialist cities by analysing the legal and socio-cultural norms that regulated property relations in the Sarajevo area from the 1990s onwards. Anthropologists have been acknowledged the centrality of housing dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as a peculiar feature of the conflict that took place between 1992 and 1995 on Bosnian-Herzegovinian territory. The Danish anthropologist Anders Stefansson used the expression “house war” to describe a conflict dominated by “door to door violence” that aimed to achieve ethnic homogenisation of territory, population, and governing powers aligned with the ethnic cleansing ratio.<sup>1</sup> This war-centred analysis considered cultural transformations in the housing field as a clear effect of military and paramilitary violence, and of the forced geographical and social mobility this entailed for citizens. As a consequence, the impact of the legal reform on Sarajevo housing dynamics has been neglected by anthropology, and the extensive theoretical literature on property relations, produced during fieldwork in other post-socialist countries, remains unapplied to the Bosnian-Herzegovinian context. The paper thus analyses the legal aspects of housing regulation from the perspective of this anthropological literature that deems it misleading and ethnocentric to study property relations as the mere relationship between the individual and the object of their possession. This concept recalls the definition of private property that is culturally specific and rooted in the development of Western European capitalist

1. A. Stefansson, “Homes in The Making. Property Restitution, Refugee Return, and Sense of Belonging in a Post-war Bosnian Town,” *International Migration*, 44: 3 (2006), pp. 115-39.

culture.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, property relations are “embedded” in the unique organisation of each society and should be broadly considered as a socially and culturally regulated relationship between individuals and assets (i.e. a house).<sup>3</sup> The present work will then document changes in housing property relations as intended by the broader and less ethnocentric concept of “distribution of social entitlements” suggested by Chris Hann.<sup>4</sup>

The first part of the paper explores normation and institutional activity to conduct an analysis of “categorical property relations” defined by von Benda-Beckmann as documentation of how “general categories of property relations are constructed by specifying property holders, property objects, and the rights and obligations attached to this.”<sup>5</sup>

The categorical analysis, however, must consider that Bosnian post-war “legal pluralism” ushered in a proliferation of institutions with normative and consultative power above and beyond state level.<sup>6</sup> The unitary State of BiH has central institutions with responsibility in few legislative matters. The elective organs located in the two main territorial divisions that substantially represent a particular ethnic group: the Croato-Bosniak *Federacija Bosne-Hercegovine* (FBiH) and the Serb *Republika Srpska* (RS) exerted a significant amount of legislative power. The FBiH is further divided into ten cantons, in each of which the majority of the population may be either Croatian or Bosniak. There is also the division of cities and municipalities by ethnicity, as in the case of Sarajevo and Mostar.

The political immobility that could derive from this extreme division of local institutions by ethnic criteria led to the appointment of a High Representative of the International Community in the Pace Agreement signed

2. C. M. Hann, “Introduction. The Embeddedness of Property,” in C. M. Hann, ed. *Property Relations: Renewing The Anthropological Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); F. von Benda-Beckmann, K. von Benda-Beckmann, G. M. Wiber, *Changing Properties of Property* (New York-London: Berghahn, 2006); K. Verdery, C. Humphry, *Property in Question: Value Transformation in The Global Economy* (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2004).

3. Hann, *Introduction: The Embeddedness of Property*.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

5. Benda-Beckmann, Benda-Beckmann, Wiber, *Changing Properties of Property*, p. 16.

6. Quoting Griffiths, the legal anthropologist Sally Falk Moore defines “legal pluralism,” the legal reality that is a general collage of obligatory practices and norms emanating both from government and non-government sources alike. S. F. Moore, “Certainties Undone: Fifty Turbulent Years of Legal Anthropology, 1949-1999” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 7 (2001), pp. 95-116.

at Dayton (Annex IX). This High Representative is not elected by Bosnian citizens, but should be the *super partes* power to guarantee civilian rights, including those related to housing. With the Bonn Powers, the High Representative exercises the authority to adopt coercive measures over all the Bosnian institutions. The institutionalisation of BiH's complex and fragmented legal hierarchy meant that in the last two decades local and foreign institutions issued countless provisions applicable to the legitimate use of houses and property.

The "categorical analysis" will try to document the coexistence of different norms, supporting competing, and sometimes contrasting, but culturally specific models of housing entitlement, from which a plurality of property relation patterns meet and interact in the Bosnian context. Consequently, we will try to explore the effects on society of this legal fragmentation and conflict that has produced continuous shifts in legislation. To examine this further, another layer of property relations will be taken into consideration, the "concretised" form defined by von Benda-Beckmann as the analysis of property relations "within the context of the wider social networks where they form an important component of multiplex relationships."<sup>7</sup>

The high degree of instability that marked the post-war Bosnian context was a result of the reconfiguration of powers in shifting political systems, and brought with it the potential to promote change in socio-cultural aspects of property relations. Nonetheless, the application of norms does not have a complete regulatory role on human behaviour because, as von Benda-Beckmann has affirmed, shifting norms may not produce synchronic shifts in citizen property relations.<sup>8</sup> A micro-level analysis based on ethnographic data could help in exploring the transformative power exerted by normation on property relations and possibly the direction of the resulting – very often unpredictable – socio-cultural change.

In particular, the paper will consider the effects of the shifting frontier on property relations between legal and illegal use of houses that could help in identifying the discriminatory effects norms have for different categories of citizens that emerge when they "concretely" cope with the bureaucratic and financial aspects of housing legal provisions. This focus will permit us to follow the drawing and redrawing of the boundaries between

7. Benda-Beckmann, Benda-Beckmann, Wiber, *Changing Properties of Property*, p. 20.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

minority and majority groups which, in this case, will be defined taking into account the possibility of accessing to housing resources.

The ethnographic data presented was gathered during fieldwork carried out in Sarajevo from 2006 to 2007, and include the results of interviews and participant observation with inhabitants of the Grbavica and Lukavica neighbourhoods, which were part of Sarajevo before the war but were assigned respectively to Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo (*Istočno Sarajevo*) by the Dayton Peace Agreement. The interviewees were all Sarajevo citizens living in socially-owned flats before suffering forced displacement to different parts of the city or throughout the country.<sup>9</sup> Their post-war relocation in the urban context necessitated their “encounter” with shifting norms.

### 1. *Entitlement to housing within shifting political systems*

When the Bosnian conflict began in 1992, socially-owned flats were still the most common form of housing in urban centres of the then-Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>10</sup> Statistical data reported by the urban planning researcher Sasha Tsenkova shows that before 1991 socially-owned flats accounted for 50% of housing in the seven largest urban areas of the country, and in Sarajevo this rose to 56%.<sup>11</sup> Socially-owned property (*društvene svojine*) was formally introduced in the 1963 constitution, which established that no one could claim legal ownership over the product of social work, or dispose of its distribution.<sup>12</sup> All residential buildings, as well as land enterprise production facilities, were acknowledged as property of Yugoslav society as a whole. This constitutional change affected all those housing resources located in urban centres that had been nationalised and declared property of the Yugoslav State. Subsequently, the state distributed them to the new working class made up of urbanised

9. Structured interviews were conducted with almost 40 people.

10. UN-Habitat, *Housing and Property Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro*, www.unhabitat.org, 2005, p. 18.

11. S. Tsenkova, *Housing Policy Reforms in Post Socialist Europe. Lost in Transition* (Heidelberg: Springer Physica-Verlag, 2009), p. 124.

12. Constitution of the SFRY 1963 (*Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*) Introduction. Basic Principles, Chapter III, 7. July 1963.

peasants enrolled to support post-war reconstruction, industrialisation, and modernisation of the country.<sup>13</sup>

In accordance with the principle of the self-management, underpinning the 1963 constitution that formally suppressed state property, all socially-owned enterprises and non-economic institutions (mainly services) had to dispose of housing funds created through the compulsory contributions paid by their employees.<sup>14</sup> Institutions called "Public Housing Enterprises" (PHE) directed construction of flats and upon completion the employing enterprise or institution assigned the flats to its employees, according to the legal provisions. The Housing Relations Act, still in force in 1992, established that user rights to flats would be allocated to employees simply by taking into account their socio-economic needs (article 24).<sup>15</sup> The law, which was meant to avoid "surplus living spaces," required that the assignment conform to the principle of rational use of the socially-owned property (*racionalno korišćenje stana*).<sup>16</sup> The flat should satisfy the basic housing needs of the employee who would show continuing need of the flat. According to Article 47 of the socialist law, the employee, also called the Occupancy Rights Holder (*Nosilac Stanarskog Prava*), could not leave the flat for more than six months if s/he wanted to preserve the right to use it. In order to prevent profit being made from use of real estate, the tenant could not sell, transfer or mortgage the flat. S/he was also obliged to pay "rent" and general maintenance expenses. Unless the Occupancy Rights Holder broke those legal conditions, s/he and other members of the household were entitled to life-long residency.

The growing incomes of the 1970s encouraged more and more individual private investors to try and buy flats in residential buildings. The phenomenon was amplified by the economic crisis of the 1980s that led to a decrease of public funds invested in the housing sector. Starting in 1975, a new procedure defined as "Publicly-Directed Housing Construction" was created and PHEs were enlisted to safeguard "public assets" by managing negotia-

13. The number of privately-owned housing units was restricted and, in any case, the land on which flats were built could not be privately owned.

14. *Law on contribution to the Housing Fund*, Official Gazette of Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), n. 57/55.

15. *Zakon o Stambenih Odnosima* /Law on Housing Relations, Official Gazette Socialističke Republike (SR) BiH 4/84, 12/86, 36/89.

16. Elements evaluated were employee housing and property situation, the number of family members, duration of employment, etc.

tion between different stakeholders, both public and private, and impeding monopolisation by any of them.<sup>17</sup> In this way, a sort of mixed market solution was found, but the whole system turned out to be inefficient and slowed down by a complicated bureaucratic procedure. Finally, the implementation of the reform was disrupted by the outbreak of war in 1991.<sup>18</sup>

During the Bosnian conflict housing norms were regulated by the temporary territorial governments and were strictly dependent on the ethnic cleansing divisive ratio since there was no central state coordination. Although the new local governments incorporated the extant socialist “Law on Housing Relations” in the body of law, they applied it in direct opposition to the ideal of “Brotherhood and Unity” (*Bratstvo i Jedinstvo*) that underpinned that law. The ethno-nationalist local governments, facing the humanitarian emergency caused by the arrival of displaced persons on their territory, strictly applied Article 47 of the Law on Housing Relations in order to suppress the occupancy rights of those citizens who were forced to abandon their flats by ethnic cleansing. Later the temporary RBiH (*Republika Bosne i Hercegovine*) and RS (*Republika Srpska*) governments approved specific laws to suspend existing occupancy rights for the socially-owned flats.<sup>19</sup> Under the same law, the duty to allocate those flats was officially transferred from the enterprises to the municipalities controlled by the ethno-nationalist parties. In addition, temporary occupancy rights (*pravo privremeno korištenja*) of flats were granted to people seeking refuge in their territory. If we consider that the ethnic cleansing operations brought those citizens marked by ethnic homogeneity to the territory of each politically sponsored local government, it becomes clear that the right to housing would have been allocated according to ethno-nationalist and not humanitarian criteria. This logic became explicit after the end of the war, when the

17. For concrete examples of the administrative effort required by Publicly-Directed Housing Construction, see also D. Kos, “A Case Study of Conflicting Housing Pluralism in Yugoslavia,” in *The Reform of Housing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London-New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 308-17.

18. An analysis of early attempts, in the 1990s, to open socially-owned enterprises to worker shareholding and external capital can be found in M. Uvalić, *Investment and Property Rights in Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

19. *Zakon o Privremeno Napuštenim Nekretninama u Svojini Građana - Law on Temporary Abandoned Real Property Owned by Citizens*, Official Gazette RBiH n. 11/93, 13/94; *Zakon o Napuštenim Stanovima - Law on Abandoned Flats*, Official Gazette RBiH n. 6/2, 8/92, 16/92, 13/94, 36/94, 9/95, 33/95.



governing bodies tried to transform the allocation rights from temporary to permanent in order to consolidate ethnic cleansing results. In the RBIH, an amendment to the previous law on abandoned flats was issued, and in the RS a new law subordinated the restitution of the property to the pre-war occupancy rights holder to the prospect of the temporary occupier (in the RS, mainly Serbs) returning to his/her own pre-war flat.<sup>20</sup> Considering that the majority of flats abandoned by Serbs were located in the Entity renamed at Dayton as the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), where those flats had been either destroyed or allocated to Bosniaks and Croat households, we can conclude that this legal provision in the RS was aimed at consolidating mono-ethnic residential models.

In the following years, erasing wartime legal provisions issued by local governments in the housing field had been one of the main goals of the diplomatic efforts made by the International Community (IC). Finally, in Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the right to housing was officially acknowledged as a fundamental step for the promotion of the return process and for the protection of private property as a fundamental individual right. The Annex stated:

All refugees and displaced persons have the right to freely return to their homes of origin. They shall have the right to have property restored to them, which they were deprived of in the course of the hostilities since 1991, and to be compensated for any property that cannot be restored to them [...]

The Parties shall ensure that refugees and displaced persons are permitted to return in safety, without risk of harassment, intimidation, persecution, or discrimination, particularly on account of their ethnic origin, religious belief, or political opinion (Annex VII).

The High Representative (HR) of the IC pursued the implementation of these principles by adopting *ad interim* decisions that obliged the Entities (read: FBiH and RS) to cancel the law on abandoned flats approved during the war.<sup>21</sup>

20. *Zakon o Korištenju Napuštene Imovine - Law on The Use of Abandoned Property*, Official Gazette RS, n. 3/96 and 21/96.

21. *Law on The Cessation of The Application of The Law on Abandoned Flats*, Official Gazette FBiH, n. 11/98 (*Zakon o prestanku primjene Zakona o napuštenim stanovima, Službene Novine Fedracije BiH*, 11/98, 39/98, 12/99, 18/99, 27/99, 43/99, 56/01); *Law on Cessation of The Application of The Law on The Use of Abandoned Property*, Official Gazette RS, n. 38/98 (*Zakon o prestanku primjene Zakona o korištenju napuštene imovine, Službeni glasnik Republike Srpske* 38/98, 12/99, 31/99, 65/01).



Image 1. Lukavica. Alternative accommodations.

In accordance with the HR's decisions, the Entities also amended and extended the period of admitted abandon of the flat provided for by Article 47 of the socialist Law on Housing Relations. The new laws issued by the Entities declared that Bosnian citizens could preserve their occupancy rights if they could prove they had abandoned their flats between April 30, 1991 and December 19, 1998 for reasons connected to the outbreak of war. In this case, the flats, whether occupied or not, would have to be returned to the competent municipal authority and given back to the pre-war occupancy rights holder after s/he claimed the property. Alternative accommodation (*alternativni smještaj*) was also assured to those citizens with housing problems who had legally gained temporary occupation rights during wartime.<sup>22</sup>

In 1999 a Commission for Real Property Claims (CRPC) by Displaced Persons and Refugees was instituted and assigned to issue binding sentences in controversies connected with housing and property matters. The

22. During fieldwork it was possible to localise only two *alternativni smještaj* buildings in Lukavica.

return was also supported by the HR through the creation of a Reconstruction and Return Task Force (RRTF) whose function was to reintegrate basic infrastructures and services existing in flats and houses before the war. Return, repossession, reconstruction, reintegration are thus the key words of the OHR legislative effort intent on promoting a return to pre-war social conditions and housing normality.

Although a frequent reference to socialist legislation should be highlighted, it must be acknowledged that the legislation promoted by the HR presents a huge transformative imprint. Private property, with respect to socially-owned flats formally belonging to Yugoslav society as a whole, was not simply reintegrated. It was rather transformed into the unique form of legally-acknowledged property and its wide implementation was promoted through a specific bureaucratic procedure. The legislation approach promoted by the HR included the rights of the pre-war Occupancy Right Holder not only to return to his/her pre-war flat, but also to start a procedure to privatise ownership (*otkup/privatisacija stana*).<sup>23</sup> All these measures were part of a wider plan to promote the privatisation process guided by international organisations represented by HR, all of whom agreed that the safeguarding of private property should be the launch pad for the democratisation of the whole country. The most harmonious and coordinated effort in this direction was the PLIP (*Property Law Implementation Project*), presented in 2000 with the *PLIP Inter-Agency Framework Document*. It required cooperation among different subjects of the IC such as OHR, UNHCR, OSCE, UNMIBH, CRPC and was openly aimed at promoting the return of IDPs and refugees to their pre-war homes by insuring them the right to property. This was also intended to promote a sustainable return process despite tough obstruction by local institutions. Moreover, the standardisation of property restitution procedures should have ensured the rule of law and “undermine[d] narrow collectivism and nationalist exclusion that prevails in BiH.”<sup>24</sup> The collectivist concept of rights would be replaced by an individual paradigm embedded in the private property

23. *Law on sale of flats with occupancy rights (Zakon o prodaju Stanova na kojima postoji stanarsko pravo*, Službene Novine FBiH, br. /27/97, 11/98, 22/98, 27/99, 32/01); *Law on privatisation of state flats (Zakon o privatizaciji državnih stanova*, Službeni Glasnik RS, br. 11/00, 18/00, 35/01, 47/02; 65/03; 17/04; 70/04; 2/05; 67/05; 118/05; 70/06; 38/07; 60/07).

24. PLIP, Inter-agency Framework Document, October 15, 2000 at: [http://www.o hr. int/plip/key-doc/default.asp?content\\_id=5510](http://www.o hr. int/plip/key-doc/default.asp?content_id=5510).

rights defined in the PLIP as a non-negotiable principle and not subject to reciprocity.<sup>25</sup> Criminalisation of double occupiers, defined as people who had already satisfied their housing needs but continued to live in somebody else's property, grew substantially within this framework.

One of the most relevant aspects of the PLIP was the abolition of the ban of the sale of houses and flats. The ban had been introduced in the aftermath of the war, when people repossessed flats only to sell them immediately after and buy new property in their location of displacement. Sales were prohibited in an effort to foster a real return process to the pre-war place of residence. When the privatisation process was encouraged, the PLIP abolished this prohibition, on the principle that selling one's own goods was recognised as a constitutional part of the individual right to private property. The liberalisation of the sale of repossessed flats officially introduced a fresh concept of the home as a material asset to be traded on a newly-established real estate market. As the buying and selling of flats was permitted on the real estate market, a new system was needed to legalise these transactions. While socially-owned properties existed, the transactions were limited to a small number of private properties listed in collective registers (*Zajedničke Knjige*) kept by municipal councils. After the PLIP, a new format was introduced, called the Register of Signed Agreements (*Knjiga Položenih Ugovora*), that recorded transactions concluded in the presence of a municipal judge. In addition, a new law was issued by both Entities to introduce the profession of notary, which never existed in the traditional Bosnian legal system.<sup>26</sup>

The liberalisation of the housing market revealed new scenarios, which encouraged PLIP implementation with unexpected consequences. In 2006, OSCE triumphantly declared that a 95% house repossession rate had been reached, but it was commonly agreed among scholars and politicians that the PLIP project essentially comprised repossession without return.<sup>27</sup> The failure of the return policy was generally attributed to the IC's misrepresentation of BiH reality. Stef Jansen analysed the logic of foreign intervention in BiH and affirmed that the return process was mistakenly organised around the "myth of home." According to Jansen,

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Zakon o notarima*, Službene novine Federacije BiH, broj 45/02; *Zakon o notarima* Službeni glasnik Rs, broj 86/04.

27. C. Philpott, "Though the dog is dead the pig must be killed: Finishing with property restitution to Bosnia-Herzegovina's IDP's and Refugees" *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 18: 1 (2005), pp. 1-24; R. Black, S. Gent, "Sustainable Return in Post-Conflict Context," *International Migration*, 44: 3 (2006), pp. 15-38.

due to the emphasis on its geographical location, home is often represented as a timeless entity in an unchanging context of origin. This is particularly inappropriate if that context is one of radical transformation.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the process of return having been taken for granted, the restitution of property, conceived of as an inalienable right of the individual, was mistakenly considered a fool-proof system to ensure equal access to housing resources and to reconstruct the pluralistic and multi-ethnic Bosnian residential model.<sup>29</sup> With the protection of private property rights the PLIP openly aimed to overcome the problem of the so-called “minority returns” i.e. the return of refugees and displaced persons to their pre-war place of residence where, as the result of ethnic cleansing, they belonged to the ethnic minority. In the aftermath of the conflict, support for minority return was based on the assumption that if someone was forced to leave their home because s/he was a member of a particular ethnic group, then his/her ethnic identity should orient return strategies and define identification with the pre-war place of residence.

The returning “majority and minority” had been defined by ethnic and quantitative criteria, by focusing on demographic balances between so-called “national numbers.” As declared in the PLIP framework, early targeted measures, such as support to minority returns (mostly to rural areas), should have been replaced by new projects that used standardised legislation and administrative measures to achieve impact on the entire territory, including urban areas where socially-owned flats were mainly located.<sup>30</sup>

Although the PLIP framework openly criticised the “minority return” approach, it failed to confute the centrality of the logic that informed the distinction between minority and majority returns, which is a gross misinterpretation of what occurred in Bosnian society and in the self-perception of the displaced person.<sup>31</sup> However, after the PLIP failed in supporting the long-term return process, it became clear to scholars and policy makers that neither the communitarian logic of reliance on ethnic belonging, nor individualized private property restitution, could be considered crucial

28. S. Jansen, “The Privatization of Home and Hope: Return, Reforms and the Foreign Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Dialectical Anthropology*, 30 (2006), p. 184.

29. *Ibid.*

30. PLIP, Inter-agency Framework Document.

31. Significantly, at that time, this institutional approach forced the IC to pay attention to demographic and symbolic elements that marked the prevalent ethnic identity of the territory.

variables in promoting sustainable return and ethnic remixing. As Stef Jansen has pointed out, variables for return are evaluated as a consequence of change in Bosnian society and its prevalent socio-economic insecurity resulting mainly from the collapse of the socialist welfare state and socio-economic rights.<sup>32</sup> According to Jansen, in a “prospective” and not “retrospective” use of home that looked back to pre-war situations or war-time experience, return strategies result from the citizen’s attempt to cope with the daily problems that arose from a defective safeguard of the above mentioned rights in the post-war period. In any case, the relevant analysis made by Jansen and other scholars, which mainly deconstructs misinterpretation of Bosnian reality that supported the implementation of IC property reform, resulted in restricting the analysis of housing property relations to the debate on the location of home and return strategies.

We suggest here that housing property relations could benefit from an empiral study of real experiences of the privatisation process that should be linked to the invalidation of previous property regimes, to the wide implementation of private property, and to the marketisation of the housing sector. In this way, property and the implementation of its reform should be approached as a factor of social mobility, differentiation, and discrimination that set forth a new conceptualisation of the majority and minority groups no longer based only on ethnic parameters. Jansen’s concluding remarks leave the floor open to this kind of analysis when he observes:

In this context, many came to see restitution of their property in itself as the only tool on offer within Bosnia-Herzegovina for their struggle against precariousness. The narrowing focus of the Foreign Intervention Agencies on the safe restitution of property, portrayed as a technical human rights issue, thus effectively established a reliance on market mechanisms for post-war compensation.<sup>33</sup>

On these grounds, the following ethnographic data explores how my interviewees coped daily with the juridical repossession of homes after displacement to a context marked by shifting property law and socio-economic conditions.

32. S. Jansen, “Troubled Locations: Return, The Life Course, and Transformations of “Home” in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Focaal. European Journal of Anthropology*, 49 (2007), pp. 15-30.

33. Jansen, “The Privatisation of Home and Hope,” p. 193.

## *2. Experiencing juridical dispossession and repossession of flat in a changing context*

In the Grbavica and Lukavica neighbourhoods where I carried out fieldwork, warfare and the synergic application of the law on abandoned flats has changed demographic balances in line with the ethnic cleansing ratio. Although an official post-war census has never been undertaken, interviews and participant observation confirmed that ethnic homogenisation of the neighbourhoods was the prevailing demographic trend. Many of my Serb informants now living in Lukavica left their socially-owned flats in the areas controlled by the government forces and moved to Grbavica, where the VRS (*Vojska Republike Srpske* or Serb Republic Army) allocated them flats, after forcibly removing inhabitants of Croatian and Bosniak nationality. When Grbavica passed into the hands of the newly-born BiH Federation after reintegration into Sarajevo, my Serb informants moved en masse to Lukavica, where some collective centres for displaced persons (one of them called ironically “Hotel Dayton”) were set-up to accommodate Serbs arriving from Sarajevo.



Image 2. “Hanging House”: Writing on the façade of a centre for displaced persons in Lukavica.



All of them lost their rights to flats occupied in Grbavica during the conflict as a result of the annulment of the law pertaining to the abandonment of flats. The same experience befell Bosniaks living in the Sarajevo neighbourhoods that were under the control of the VRS.<sup>34</sup> They were forced to leave their flats and move into neighbourhoods controlled by government forces, where they occupied empty flats until the law provided for their restitution.

In sharing “housing odyssey” experience, my informants never described the entering of a flat as compensation for the forced deprivation of their own property enacted by the ethnic enemy. Flat entering was conceived as an embarrassing practice entailing the violation of someone else’s property and privacy. Even though we are talking about a socialist country, this is not surprising because, as Chris Hann has underlined, socialism was not marked by a “property vacuum” but by different regulations for property relations.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned above, the socialist system had fostered identification of flats with their habitual inhabitants. Although people’s use of flat was subject to restriction, their occupancy rights were life-long and could be inherited by members of their household. For that reason, when talking about pre-war times, my interviewees often defined their “own” flat as the one they were allocated and for which they could claim social entitlement. Thus, settling into somebody else’s flat was not justified by ethnic hatred and many of my informants tried to avoid entering those flats by seeking hospitality in the homes of friends and family. When even those accommodations became overcrowded some of my informants decided to leave Sarajevo or Bosnia, while others had no choice but to move into empty flats. Some of them tried to ask for the “owner” allowance. A young Bosniak girl, forced to move with her family from the neighbourhood of Ilidža to a neighbourhood controlled by the government forces, explained that her family looked for the telephone number of the flat owner and when they finally found it they called him to communicate that they were entering the flat. “Flat entering” created the paradoxical situation of being “taken into” the “ethnic Other’s” domestic space and sometimes making it very difficult to identify the pre-war inhabitants as members of the enemy group. More often, when my informants found objects left in the flats by the pre-war inhabitants, they expressed empathy

34. Bosniak (Bošnjak) is the post-war official denomination for Bosnian population of Islamic faith.

35. Hann, “Introduction. The Embeddedness of Property,” p. 7.

with them, justified by the shared condition of having been forced to leave “home.” In these situations the ethnic enemy was not identified with the household that had lived in the flat before them, but with the members of the adversary army or with anonymous criminals who had forced unarmed people to leave their homes. In order to protect her property from robbery or looting by these unknown hostile persons, one of my Serb informants, who had been forced to move from Iliaš to Lukavica (controlled by the VRS), even emphasized that she left her house to Bosniak neighbours of her own volition.

This data shows that ethnic cleansing did not help to define “flat entering” (*uđi stan*) as “normal.” Although local institutions tried to make the use of abandoned flats appear legitimate, the practice was only considered socially acceptable due to the contingent situation. In no way could it be interpreted as an automatic political consensus to the distribution of social entitlement to property on the basis of the ethnicity of inhabitants, which underpinned the housing policy of the ethno-nationalist forces. The unforeseeable duration of the conflict and the abolition of any pre-war occupancy rights for inhabitants by the law on abandoned flats aroused in displaced Sarajevans a new perception of their housing condition by encouraging a strong feeling of dispossession. Many of my informants confessed that they started to believe that the arbitrary suppression of their social entitlements to the pre-war flat was completely consistent with the moment of institutional disorder and violence they lived in. This explanation seemed to be more plausible for those people who had already experienced the confiscation of property during the nationalisation campaign carried out by the Yugoslav State in the aftermath of WWII. After the last war as the confiscation came to be perceived as a certainty, the prolonged permanence of the displaced households in the assigned flat promoted some form of identification with it, and some tenants also started to perceive the new accommodation as compensation for what they had lost. As I was able to observe directly in 1999 when I was a guest in a displaced Bosniaks household that had been allocated a flat in Grbavica, the occupants gradually started adapting the flat to their personal needs by investing small amounts of their own money. Personalisation usually began with some basic work to make the flat more liveable: the most common being the repair of the front door and windows damaged by military action. In some cases, personalisation dynamics were completed when the family name of the new tenants replaced that of the previous on the front door.

After the Dayton agreement, these strategies were disrupted by the withdrawal of the law on abandoned flats on the decision of the HR, who declared it illegal to use somebody else's flat in order to implement what was defined as "property restitution." At the same time, this process opened the way to a rapid, generalised shift towards the private property regime. Already, with property restitution, the legal use of housing was defined as an exclusive right of the pre-war occupancy rights holder and/or the members of his/her household. Entering or exchanging flats then became a violation of private property rights.

The rapid acknowledgment of the latter did not, however, produce a synchronic change in the way my informants perceived their social entitlement to the flat they entered during the conflict. In the immediate post-war period the safety issue was still of decisive importance for my informants and made sense of their use of the flat even after the IC decided on property restitution. For most of those interviewed, the wartime flat was still conceived merely as a shelter, unless it was located in a neighbourhood assigned to hostile forces by the Dayton agreement.<sup>36</sup>

Almost five years after the end of the war, Sarajevo socio-cultural re-definition of what had to be considered "their right to use the flat" seemed to be much more influenced by the on-going clash between criteria for acknowledging property rights promoted by ethno-national local institutions and those promoted by the IC. As we know, while ethno-nationalist institutions worked to normalise the housing condition of displaced persons who entered flats previously inhabited by households of different ethnicity, the IC pushed for the criminalisation of this condition. IC property reform was marked by the progressive criminalisation of the group known as "double occupiers," i.e. those had already satisfied their housing needs by repossessing their pre-war flat but continued to live in someone else's flat. However, I spoke with functionaries of the refugee ministry and housing ministries in the Sarajevo Canton who pointed out that they disagreed with the use of the term "occupier" and openly refused to use it to define displaced people who were allocated flats by the competent authorities according to the law and were not violating anyone else's rights.

36. Return to pre-war flats located in other neighbourhoods of Sarajevo was evaluated carefully and slowly, even though they were assigned to the urban territory governed by "allied" forces. As my interlocutors explained, whenever they tried to return, the process was often completed in different moments and it sometimes entailed elder family members moving in order to check if the place was safe and to remove the traces of wartime inhabitants from the flat.

The post-war struggle among political powers, together with radical institutional change, caused a situation of indeterminacy in property matters. In this period the effective possibility of repossessing pre-war flats was threatened also by the problematic implementation of the bureaucratic procedure set up to guarantee property restitution. This aspect clearly emerges from the experience of those Sarajevans who, under the effect of the enforced rule of property restitution, had to face the procedure defined by law in order to claim the flats allocated to them before the war. For some of my informants this procedure was very complicated and, above all, too drawn out. In the case of Radovan, a Serb Sarajevan now living in Lukavica, the bureaucratic procedure to get his Sarajevo flat back took seven years (1995–2002). When similar cases occurred, some of my informants suggested that the adversary ethno-national forces controlling the local institutions where they had to present their claim were politically obstructive.

For example, Katica, a Croat inhabitant of Grbavica, explained that she had to work two and a half years to reclaim her flat because she had a Croatian name in a place where Bosniak are the majority.<sup>37</sup>

I worked for two and a half years to get the right to my property recognised... They asked me ridiculous things, from a citizenship certificate to [...] and I had been living in that flat for 35 years, cut off from the present institutions only because I am not Bosniak which meant I would be deprived of my flat. We came from Croatia and we have an unusual name here. They made an issue of the fact that my mother was called Antonina and not Antonia. I brought all her documents but they weren't necessary to get the flat. My husband was the primary tenant of the flat and after his death I inherited the right to live there and claim it. My mother has never been a member of our household. It took six months to find the right office at the town hall and ask for advice, then get the documents. They just want to bother people and force them to go away.<sup>38</sup>

Ilija, a Serb Sarajevan, was even more explicit. He openly blamed Federation authorities that nationalised Sarajevo territory for the bureaucratic problems he had to face in claiming his pre-war flat.

They (the Federation authorities) changed the name of the street where I'd lived for twenty years. They dedicated it to some representative figure of Islamic history. So when I presented the request for privatisation, the IC and

37. All the names are pseudonyms.

38. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, February 2007. Interviewee: Katica, female, 69 years old, Croatian nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.

the OSCE answered that my old street did not exist anymore. I visited several offices for eleven years. Then I bought a new map of the city and I underlined where my neighbourhood and my street were. In this way I presented my request to OSCE. After three years they acknowledged that my street now has a new name only because someone got up one day and decided to cancel all the Serb denominations.<sup>39</sup>

My informants apportioned similar blame to the offices of international organisation unable or unwilling to help them in claiming their flat and solving the eventual disputes. Subuljka, who had tried to repossess her flat in Grbavica after being displaced to the Mojmić district, blamed institutions – and not only local ones – for their unwillingness to help.

Nobody helped us to get back our flat. I wandered around municipal offices for six years to be able to come back and live in my flat. Although I remained here during the war, and I didn't leave the country, it was difficult to get my flat back only because I left it and moved to another part of the city. Nobody helped us, not the IC or the NGOs. Wherever I went, I got no answers and some even asked for money to help us a bit.<sup>40</sup>

The same complaint came from Branko, a Serb Sarajevan who, after moving to Lukavica, wanted to repossess a flat in the neighbourhood of Mojmić that was destroyed and replaced by another building during the war:

I went to the OHR many times. There is not a single institutions left where I haven't been: from the ministries to the Prime Minister of the Federation and the Republika Srpska, but it was all useless. Nobody could help me to repossess what was formally my flat even though materially I have nothing.<sup>41</sup>

In general, problems linked to bureaucratic procedure for claiming flats reveal the more telling issue of finding one's bearings in the new post-war institutional panorama with which Bosnian citizens were still unfamiliar. Thus, some of the problems derived from the difficulty of finding "the right office," to use Katica's words: the office tasked with a specific matter. In their search for the office that could better help them have their new rights acknowledged,

39. Interview carried out in Eastern Sarajevo, May 2007. Interviewee: Ilija, male, 50 years old, Serb nationality, inhabitant of Lukavica.

40. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, March 2007. Interviewee: Subuljka, female, 49 years old, Croatian nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.

41. Interview carried out in Eastern Sarajevo, June 2007. Interviewee: Branko, male, 47 years old, Serb nationality, inhabitant of Lukavica.

displaced Sarajevans had to cope with a fragmented institutional panorama made up of ethnically divided local institutions. When the local officers showed hostility and intended to discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, a sense of hostility on the part of the territory controlled by those institutions was also conveyed. In these cases, the “right office” was the one that protected the right of his/her ethnic group. Ilija was very clear on this point.

Whenever I went to the municipal district and found a label written in ‘Muslim’, I wouldn’t enter that office. My interests cannot be protected by Haris Silajdić.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, several international organisations (governmental or not) were initially perceived as a valid alternative to the inefficiencies of local institutions. However, they became an unreliable expression of external powers with no awareness of changes in Bosnian territory and reality.

Notwithstanding the several advertising campaigns launched by the OHR, instability brought by the frequent shifts in norms and procedures made it very hard to acquire a complete knowledge of the laws in force. It is understandable that one’s level of education becomes a crucial factor in orienting oneself in this complex system in transformation, as well as in managing the very formal bureaucratic procedure. Sutka, a Bosniak resident of Grbavica, who has a degree in law, told me that she did not find the process to be too difficult:

I claimed my flat very easily. We – my husband and I – are educated people. It wasn’t so complicated for us to get our flat back. I don’t know if everyone was in the same situation. We had to prove that we were BiH citizens and produce many other documents but it was worthwhile. It took a month and we got the flat back. Our flat!<sup>43</sup>

Dženana, a biotechnologist from Grbavica, told me that everything went well and that they had to show only documents proving that they were the pre-war inhabitants of the house, and that they had not sold the property to the occupants and so on. In Lukavica, an accountant named Sonja told me that she found no difficulty in repossessing the flat. For elderly and not so cultivated people like Anđa, the procedures were more arduous:

42. Haris Silajdić is a Bosnian politician, leader of the political party *Stranka za BiH*. In 2006 he was elected the Bosniak representative for the Bosnian triple presidency.

43. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, April 2007. Interviewee: Sutka, female, 52 years old, Bosniak nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.

Everything had to be alright. Not one word could be wrong. It would be enough for one name to be wrong and the judge would not give the property back to you.<sup>44</sup>

As soon as it became clear that applying for property restitution would be the only way to be compensated for wartime dispossession, knowledge of key legislative acts affecting the right to flats, institutions having any decisional power over housing issues, and bureaucratic procedures became crucial in the lives of displaced and dispossessed Sarajevans. Names like “*Aneks sedam*” (Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement), “*Visok Predstavnik*” (High Representative), OSCE, “*Kuća Ljudska Prava*” (House of Human Rights) became part of informal daily conversations for my informants. When we were dealing with international institutions, names or documents written in English, they would transliterate them into the local alphabet. In other cases, this linguistic importation from English also brought different concepts of housing as private property into the local culture. This is particularly visible in the definition of the process called in English “privatisation”, which was not part of the pre-war verbal and practical experience of most Sarajevan households, which initially called it “*otkup stana*” (literally, “to redeem the flat”). Nowadays the same procedure has become popular with the term “*privatizacija*,” which recalls the English word “privatisation” and the concept of private property. As the presented data shows, property restitution was then achieved not as a natural and obvious process, but through the massive and enforced use of legislative tools that do not merely reintegrate property rights, but reshape the right to housing on new principles.

### 3. *Privatisation and marketisation of flats:*

#### *Towards the identification of new minorities*

The majority of my informants in Grbavica and Lukavica had to become familiar with privatisation procedures since they were living in socially-owned flats before the war. Many of them benefitted from a reduction of the market price of their apartment by presenting both the certificates proving they were entitled to apply for privatisation and other documents

44. Interview carried out in Eastern Sarajevo, June 2007. Interviewee: Anda, female, 89 years old, Serb nationality, inhabitant of Lukavica.



required by law. Taking advantage of this kind of procedure represented a unique opportunity for private individuals to become “owners.” In fact, as privatisation occurred in an impoverished Bosnia, it was never a solution for my informants to ask for a loan to redeem the flat. Although new credit tools are available on the Bosnian market, banks considered few of the interviewees to be reliable risks.<sup>45</sup>

This explains Sutka’s enthusiastic attitude toward the whole bureaucratic procedure:

Many people say that the privatisation procedure has been complicated. I think it’s been complicated but also a great thing! I always say that we bought the flat with documents, not money.<sup>46</sup>

“*Kupiti za papire*” (to buy with documents) was a very popular expression among interviewees who faced privatisation. Kole was told that with documents he could privatise the flat he lived in for only 5,000 euros. Denis told me that he and his family could get a flat whose market value was 300,000 marks (150,000 euros) for 20,000 (10,000 euros). Generally speaking, the “fairness” of the privatisation procedure was hardly questioned by my informants as it enabled them to become owners of their flat by paying just a small amount of money.

If, on one hand, the privatisation procedures gathered the consensus of people entitled to benefit from them, on the other, it changed the past rules for access to property and created mechanisms for social discrimination among citizens. As mentioned above, during the war a harsh contrast emerged with respect to the socialist period, regarding the criteria ruling the distribution of entitlement of flats, when this had nothing to do with the ethnic identity of the employees in socially-owned firms. Employment was then the main principle for acknowledging the entitlement to housing resources. Some informants defined as “coincidental” having a neighbour of the same nationality when they explained how their household was assigned a flat by the company who employed them.

Although the high rate of employment ensured a generalised distribution of housing resources regardless of ethnic group, the mechanism did

45. An IMF working paper written by Kechen and Chivakul reported that in 2004, 41% of the population needed funding, but 80.5% of those in need were refused credit or discouraged from borrowing by lenders identified mainly as banks (<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2008/wp08202.pdf>).

46. For interview details see note 41.

not ensure the social equality of this distribution in practice. As Carolin Leutloff Grandits has stated, discrimination in housing access and distribution of socially-owned flats was informally influenced by an inhabitant's degree of political commitment to the Communist League of Yugoslavia.<sup>47</sup> This was widely confirmed by those inhabitants of Grbavica and Lukavica who were able to privatise flats with more rooms, on upper floors, and with higher market value as a result of their prominent position within the Party's political and bureaucratic hierarchy.

After the last conflict, inhabitants of the two neighbourhoods had to deal with the new provisions issued by the Entities seeking to introduce the privatisation process for socially-owned flats. As described above, with the new law, the Entities aimed to facilitate the privatisation procedure for those citizens who presumably belonged to the ethnic majority in their territory and supported their army during the conflict. As a result, a dispute arose in the Federation around the so-called *Vojni stanovi* (military flats), which were assigned to the officers or workers of the Yugoslavian army (*Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija-JNA*). In Grbavica, a neighbourhood inhabited by people working in and for the JNA (*vojno naselje*), many of my informants claimed to have had problems in repossessing and privatising their flats, even though they had already redeemed their flat before the war by exploiting the controlled privatisation process that involved socially-owned properties of public institutions like the JNA in the early 1990s. Many of the interviewees had already paid the full price of the flat to the JNA housing fund but the new law adopted in the Federation after the war openly declared that it would not acknowledge housing rights certified by housing companies that were part of military organisations representing countries other than Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>48</sup> These provisions were an attempt to discriminate against people employed by the JNA, considered representatives of the Serb government and responsible for the "aggression towards the BiH" (*"agresija protiv BiH"*).

Moreover, in Grbavica the effects of the federal provision involved different nationalities. Flats in the neighbourhood had been allocated to

47. C. Leutloff Grandits, *Claiming Ownership in Post-War Croatian Villages* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2006), p. 19.

48. *Law on the cessation of the application of the law on abandoned flats*, Official Gazette FbiH n. 11/98 (*Zakon o prestanku primjene Zakona o napuštenim stanovima*, *Službene Novine Fedracije BiH* 11/98, 39/98, 12/99, 18/99, 27/99, 43/99, 56/01).

JNA personnel, which included a majority of Serbs but also people of different nationalities. For example, Beriša and his wife are both Bosniak and worked as cooks for the JNA. They told me:

We had already bought it in peace time. In 1991 we paid our army, the JNA, in cash. Now it doesn't exist anymore and they've asked us to pay for the flat a second time. There is a procedure pending and I hope they won't evict me from my flat after 43 years of being here.<sup>49</sup>

Jasna, also Bosniak, worked in an administrative role for the JNA, and had the same problems repossessing the flat she had already paid for. Ethnic discrimination also underpins the FbiH law that openly favours Bosniaks and Croats by setting a price cut of 0.25% for each month of enrolment in the Bosnian Army (RBiH) or in the Croatian Council of Defence (HVO). A discount of 20% to 100% is assured for the offspring or other family members of the RBiH who died in the war.

A similar provision is present in RS law, which favours Serb citizen discounts on the market price of 5%-40% for war veterans or relatives of dead VRS soldiers ("*pali borci*"). For each month of enrolment in the army, the price is cut by 1%-0.75%. Although many of my informants benefited from a discount on the flat price for the above reasons, only two people mentioned them as a decisive element in making the privatisation process more affordable.

During participant observation in the neighbourhoods it became clear that those who benefitted from a higher rate of discount for these reasons had often been criticised by their neighbours and even by members of the same ethnic group. Although in conversation my informants showed empathy with the suffering of their fellow citizens, they also believed that those categories of people were unfairly considered more damaged because of military involvement in the ethnic cause. "We were all damaged!" explained one of them while contesting social praise and economic facilities reserved for war veterans and their families. Others complained that while some people were facilitated due to their military engagement (war veterans or war invalids), nothing was given to disabled, unemployed, or retired civilians damaged by the economic crisis caused by the war.

49. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, March 2007. Interviewees: Beriša, male, 57 years old, Bosniak nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica; Nada, female, 55 years old, Bosniak nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.

Descriptions of the rates of discount that came from presentation of so-called certificates of employment (“*certifikate radnog staža*”) were less controversial. A discount was given for every year of employment in any juridical public or private position in the SFRJ up to 6 April 1992, the date when the war started, with a maximum of 75% of the total price of the flat in the FiBH and 60% for the RS. We should highlight, nonetheless, that the new law reserved this possibility for those people entitled to use the flat during the socialist regime as they were employed in socially-managed companies or state institutions. This explains why some of my informants appear to think that the right to property was more closely linked to worker rights than to the rights of members of an ethnic group or to the socio-economic rights of the individual as such. Whenever I asked if someone thought everybody should be entitled to privatise a flat, the answers were very similar to this one given by Jasna, a middle-aged woman employed during the socialist regime:

Why shouldn't it be like this? If someone has worked, why not allow them [sic] to buy a flat? Why should somebody have five flats and rent them while somebody else can't buy just one flat after working for 50 years? Just because the state has collapsed, why should that person lose all their rights?<sup>50</sup>

Jasna's words show how the right to housing could still be linked to a typical socialist conception of the house as a basic asset that should be ensured to all workers. Moreover, this allocation should respond to an ideal of social equity, protecting citizens from the tough law of the market and avoiding inequitable distribution of material goods that could be used for speculation and capital accumulation.

According to political scientist Timothy Donais, the system of vouchers, or “*certifikate*” as my informants call them, is far from being a guarantee of equal distribution of housing resources. It was more likely to be a way to increase speculation on real estate.<sup>51</sup> As Donais reports,

Vouchers are initially bought from impoverished citizens for a small fraction of their face value and then used to buy up state-owned property and assets, and then used to buy up state-owned enterprises and assets for next to nothing.<sup>52</sup>

50. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, April 2007. Interviewee: Jasna, female, 57 years old, Bosniak nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.

51. T. Donais, “The Politics of Privatization in Post-Dayton Bosnia,” *Southeast European Politics*, 3: 1 (2002), pp. 1-19.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

However, for the majority of my informants who decided to use the vouchers to privatise a pre-war flat, the new law also allowed them to engage in transactions in the new real estate market, even though they were not intending to accumulate capital, but merely to find a solution to their housing needs that was more suitable for their new – often worsened – economic condition. The purchase of a smaller flat was more economical for those who could not pay the utilities of a larger pre-war flat. The reduced number of household members, due to death or migration, was also cited as a further reason for selling the flat in order to buy one that was smaller and more economical.<sup>53</sup> This was especially true for retired persons of all national origins, who now have a consistently lower income than in the socialist period. Ziba, for example, told me:

I lived in a skyscraper and when I found myself alone, I preferred to have a smaller flat in Grbavica, which was damaged and thus had a lower price. I wasn't able to pay the high bills of the old flat, and here they are lower.<sup>54</sup>

Very often the lack of fresh capital to invest in renovation encouraged my informants to maximise the difference between the sale price of their pre-war flat and the purchase price of the flat they wanted to buy. Other informants, who decided to privatise their damaged flat, used the same logic when deciding to rent a different accommodation somewhere else while waiting for their property to be repaired with public reconstruction funds, and to then sell it at a higher price. This choice was very popular among Serbs living in Lukavica who told me they had no intention of returning to Sarajevo but wanted to keep the property there in order to sell it “when the right moment comes” (“*u nekom određenom vrijeme*”).<sup>55</sup> In spite of these considerations, it is not my intention to assert that my informants' housing dynamics and property relations were only driven by strictly economic reasons. I tend to think that the introduction of property as a market asset pushed new owners to make their decisions about housing solutions based on both the affective and the market value of the house.<sup>56</sup>

53. As the von Benda Beckmanns and Wiber have underscoted, the way people use their rights to property depends on a mixture of rights they enjoy for different things, and on their wealth.

54. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, February 2007. Interviewee: Ziba, female, 73 years old, Bosniak nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.

55. Interview carried out in Eastern Sarajevo, June 2007. Interviewee: Zoran, male, 48 years old, Serb nationality, inhabitant of Lukavica.

56. As flats were also conceived of as economic resources, the ethnic identity of the buyer and of the seller were not an obstacle to a successful transaction. In Grbavica, for

The opportunity to sell privatised flats gave members of the socialist working class the freedom to search for housing solutions that were a better fit in the current economic situation, which in all cases had been deeply transformed by the war experience and by the collapse of the socialist welfare state. More importantly, the socialist allocation of flats to workers still provided them with a form of social protection represented by the possibility to have an asset to barter on the new real estate market. The high rate of unemployment and the low wages left no other way of fighting downward social and economic mobility or of being protected by access to housing regulated by free market dynamics. The socialist working class benefitted from protection on the basis of the “restitution” principle, which entailed continuity in the identification of people entitled to use a flat both before and after the war. As we have seen, this principle was intended to encourage return and acknowledge the right to property without ethnic discrimination. This mechanism, however, now discriminates against all those citizens who are unable to make claims for social property assigned during the socialist regime.

My informants in Grbavica and Lukavica included younger Bosnians who fitted into this category and were facing the phenomenon of housing marketisation without the socio-economic guarantees enjoyed by workers during the socialist government and without any rights to the privatisation that the post-war law granted only to their parents.<sup>57</sup> In an interview in July 2006 with Halisa Skopljak, a property legal assistant at OSCEBiH, she identified young married couples as one category that resisted forced eviction longer than others and constituted the so-called “hard cases” in the implementation of the property law. She said that very often young couples who lived with their parents would see moving into somebody else’s flat as

example, the mass movement of Serbs allowed Bosniaks to settle in the neighbourhood and they started to buy Serbs flats. Only one person out of the 40 interviewed declared that she refused to sell her property to a person belonging to an ethnic group that hurt her family by killing her son.

57. This discriminatory effect of Bosnian post-war housing policy was also emphasised in the UN-Habitat report: “The privatisation process provided a good opportunity for most B-H citizens to purchase socially-owned flats under favorable conditions, which guaranteed their security of tenure. [...] Another problem today is housing affordability especially for young people.” UN-Habitat, *Housing and Property Rights*, p. 53. The report also considers the discriminatory effects on the Roma minority, which I do not analyse in depth in this paper because there were no Roma informants in the neighborhoods of Grbavica and Lukavica.

a chance to get out of their parents' home. In addition, being employed no longer automatically entitled residents to housing. In the context of marketisation of housing resources, employment becomes relevant as far as it provides the individual with a regular income that makes them more reliable in the eyes of banks and other types of lenders. Notwithstanding, loans were not always enough to cover the amount of money needed to solve their housing needs, as explained by Vanja, a young mother:

Before it was marvellous! You started work in a firm, you could get married, have children, and you also had registered extra income and according to that amount, the state gave you a flat. The state helped you and you had a place to live. Now I really don't know how I can buy a flat. I've no idea. If I ask for a loan, the bank wouldn't give me one big enough to buy a flat and even if I got the loan, I couldn't buy anything else because of the large repayments.<sup>58</sup>

Denis, who is 30 years old, talked about the privatisation process of his parent's flat and emphasised the difficulties in buying a house encountered by young people who are neither entitled to any rights to privatise a flat, nor have a level of income high enough to apply for a loan that would enable them to buy a new flat:

My parents saved 30,000 marks to privatise their flat, which has a value of 300,000. To buy this flat today I would need a wage of 3,000 marks to get a very good loan and it would take at least 30 years for me to repay it. My parents got that flat in 1985, when they were two-three years older than me, and they were able to get a flat worth 300,000 marks! Communism gave them what the current system does not allow us to get.<sup>59</sup>

As Vanja and Denis make clear, young people are unable to afford housing because of the lack of institutional provisions for limiting market distortion of supply and demand, which would help households satisfy their housing needs.

As of the mid-2000s, local and foreign institutions contracted out the allocated funds for the housing sector to subsidise new construction, in particular. As a consequence, housing construction became a profitable sector that basically remained in the hands of private contractors, generally aimed

58. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, April 2007. Interviewee: Vanja, female, 28 years old, Serb nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.

59. Interview carried out in Sarajevo, April 2007. Interviewee: Denis, male, 30 years old, Croatian nationality, inhabitant of Grbavica.



at serving the upper echelon of the housing market.<sup>60</sup> Privatisation of housing construction also meant a flow of foreign capital into the Bosnian housing market that was very often directed at building or buying property in more profitable locations like the city centre or prestigious neighbourhoods, i.e. areas with a higher concentration of economic activity and infrastructure.<sup>61</sup> Foreign investments, in turn, inflated the real estate prices and made it impossible for local institutions to fund social housing projects, as has been stated by Samir Silajdžić, housing minister of the Sarajevo Canton. In an interview I carried out in September 2006, the minister affirmed that local institutions were unable to satisfy the housing needs of almost 50,000 people because the price per square metre was very high in the Canton territory.<sup>62</sup> The rising prices became an obstacle especially for young generations of Bosnians wishing to buy property for two major reasons: they were unable to benefit from publicly-funded housing construction and the price-to-income ratio increased, thus reducing the affordability of home purchase.<sup>63</sup> As in the cases of Vanja and Denis, those aspects, together with restricted mortgage lending, pose serious obstacles in the home-ownership market for younger people. As a result, the most widespread solutions are to continue living with parents or renting flats and paying for the lease and utilities. Their situation, worsened by latest recession, sometimes makes my younger informants, like Veselin, nostalgic for the small exemptions offered during wartime. He said that during the war people were exempted from paying utilities and leases but today, with the crisis, it is hard to cope with incoming bills.

60. Tsenkova, *Housing Policy Reform in Post-Socialist*, p. 131

61. As Tsenkova reported, this dynamic encouraged the creation of housing submarkets; that is, a diversification of house prices among different areas of the city with a consistent increase of prices per square metre in central areas. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

62. In downtown neighbourhoods, privatisation rights have not yet been guaranteed to pre-war residents who were allocated the so-called *Nacionalizovani stanovi* before the war, and which were confiscated by the socialist government from private owners. Today those flats are being returned (*pod restitucijom*), mainly to religious congregations. As emphasised by some people who lived in nationalised flats, the liberalisation of the real estate market made it very difficult for them to afford privatisation even if they are officially entitled to it. This is due to the very high price of those flats with exceptional architectural and historical value. Moreover, many Bosnian households cannot compete with the purchasing power of foreign investors interested in downtown buildings.

63. As Tsenkova has shown, reporting data by Registra, Analystas and Imantra, this ratio in BiH is around 16% and exceeds the Western Balkans average of around 13.7%. Tsenkova, *Housing Policy Reform in Post-Socialist*, p. 137.

Alienation from property for new generations of Bosnians certainly constitutes one of the most relevant aspects of post-war and post-socialist change in the social structure. And as my informants stressed, the legal and economic rules of the real estate market discriminate across generations, not only across different ethnic groups.

#### 4. Conclusion

The description of the housing regulation process in the late 1980s led to the identification of three competing socio-political systems: the socialist, humanitarian-ethno-nationalist, and the neo-liberal. Diachronic analysis has shown that each of the political systems tried to use the function of legislation to regulate housing resources according to their own political goals and ideological background. As I have shown, these systems generated a set of conflicting and overlapping rules in a very short span of time marked by rapid social changes. Moreover, previous norms were often abolished and then reinstated and reinterpreted, according to the new political objectives of the changing ruling powers. In this context of institutional development, an important continuity can be traced in the effort made by different political powers to reform the law regulating housing entitlements. The high number of provisions issued in relation to housing property confirm that this issue lies at the centre of a “field of powers” in Bosnia for its potential to transform the social and political balance in the direction desired by the ruling powers. As Caterina Borelli recently noted, housing is one of the basic means of social reproduction and, for this reason, it assumes a key value in defining and understanding the prevailing political economy in each society, and in the post-war Bosnian case, a socialist society that aspires to become a market democracy.<sup>64</sup>

Legal provisions regulating entitlement to houses have always assumed a fundamental relevance both for implementing institutional social and political projects and for gathering the support of citizens for these projects. This explains the prevailing articulation of the property discourse of different political systems in terms of rights: for workers, refugees and

64. C. Borelli, “La vivienda en Yugoslavia: el caso de Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Diagonal*, 30 (2012) at: <http://www.revistadiagonal.com/articles/analisi-critica/vivienda-en-yugoslavia-el-caso-de-bosnia-herzegovina-2>.

displaced persons, and individuals. In any case, the reshuffling of power relations and the consequent legislative changes are in no way to be interpreted as different stages of a teleological process culminating in a generalised, effortless affirmation of private property. After all, both the cumulative effects of ethnic cleansing and property restitutions made people suffer multiple and coercive evictions, which are a symptomatic effect of this enforced legal transition.

In interaction with social practice, the continuous legislative shifts had destabilizing effects on home-making as a key life project and on the cultural production of social entitlement to housing resources. Katherine Verdery explains that

[...] to understand post-socialist property we must look beyond both things and the rights claimed to them, focusing instead on meanings, relations, and powers.<sup>65</sup>

Particularly in urban centres, where socially-owned flats constituted the majority of available housing resources, my informants seem to prove that the privatisation law has not been successful in affirming property as an inalienable right of the individual to act like a private player on the real estate market. For the majority of my informants who were able to privatise their flats, the ensuing property rights are perceived less as a result of inclusion in an ethnic majority than as the result of their membership in a socialist working class. This perception is not only rooted in past cultural experience but finds an active basis in more recent occurrences. Belonging to an ethnic majority has become a legitimate reason to have shelter or discounts on the sales price of the flat, but it has not been a valid basis for acquiring the entitlement to privatise the flat. Moreover, while entitlements to housing based on employment are still considered legitimate by my informants, benefits given to war veterans, war invalids or the families of those killed in action are very often perceived as a political-type privilege and, in some cases, become the reason for open protest in a situation of generalised economic stress.

In addition, neither the access to housing resources on an ethnic basis, nor the affirmation of rights to private property granted to the individual seem

65. K. Verdery, "Fuzzy Property: Rights, Power and Identity in Transylvania's Decollectivization," in M. Burawoy, K. Verdery, eds., *Uncertain Transitions. Ethnographies of Change in the Post-Socialist World* (London-New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 53-82.

to be relevant for those who try to acquire home ownership outside of any social benefits. Younger Bosnians do not claim rights as members of ethnic groups, nor blame other ethnic groups for hindering their access to property. They more often claim to have been deprived of property rights assured to workers by the previous system. In their reports of the obstacles encountered in buying a flat, they underscore how the dynamics of the real estate market work to discourage individuals from owning a home, in contrast with the socialist period when ownership was almost universally possible.

All of my informants describe a sort of “displaced sense of property” that does not refer simply to disorientation caused by changing legal entitlements to flats, nor does it deny people agency in facing this change. Indeed, this expression underlines the existence of legally undefined spaces and social insecurity that demand major regulation of the real estate market and a more active (financial) engagement of the public sector in housing matters. Displaced sense of property seems to recall the “fuzziness of property” theorised by Verdery, who also used this expression to explain the existence of discriminatory dynamics in property relations: “Yet other reasons for fuzziness appear if we define property as a bundle of powers crystallized into practices of exclusion and inclusion within routinized rules.”<sup>66</sup>

I have highlighted here the relevance of reconsidering the inclusion and exclusion dynamics as conceptualised by minority and majority groups through focusing on structural and intergenerational discrimination. This makes the BiH very similar both to other societies facing post-socialist issues and to those involved in the recession and retraction of the welfare state. Property relations in Sarajevo became the product of these dynamics that can be seen in the differentiation of social structure where we find a growing number of tenants instead of owners. The difficult access to property in the housing sector – determined by new real estate market trends – is also mirrored in the transformation of the urban landscape where more malls than flats are being built, with a parallel expansion in ‘own-builds’ and illegal settlement.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 55.



## Contributors

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